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HAWTHORNE'S THEORY OF ART

Kenneth Weinitz

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

June 11, 1963

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INTRODUCTION

To understand an artist, it is expedient to define the artist's theory of art. The artist's theory not only helps one to understand his works better, but it also serves as a base to consider the characteristics distinctive to his art.

Critics have not given much direct emphasis to Hawthorne's theory of art as theory. Since Hawthorne's practice in his best works is uniformly characteristic, many students of Hawthorne have accepted his practice as a demonstration of his theory. The assumption in the case of most artists is valid, and in respect to Hawthorne natural especially since he did not develop, or publish at least, a systematic theory of art. Yet there are several discrepancies between Hawthorne's theory and practice.

One such discrepancy arises from Hawthorne's statements in which he expresses a preference for realism as found in Trollope's novels whereas his own works generally reflect his relationship with romanticism, e. g., the shadowy past and some of the characteristics of gothic melodrama.

Another discrepancy or problem, which tests both Hawthorne's aesthetic theory and artistic practice, comes to light when one attempts to see the relationship between his theory of art and artistic practice. The problem is that in his statements about art Hawthorne does not treat three of the

chief characteristics of his own works: irony, allegory (except incidentally), and artistic ambiguity.

No one can question Hawthorne's integrity as an artist and sincerity as a man, however. Hawthorne's sense of moral decorum and steadfastness in the face of the realities of life preclude any frivolity or conscious hypocrisy on his part in art and morality. There are two possible answers which the student of Hawthorne may consider in order to reconcile these divergencies in Hawthorne's theory and practice and to understand Hawthorne the man as well as the artist. One possibility is that Hawthorne's temperament led him to write in a way that was not necessarily in accord with his expressed personal tastes. In other words Hawthorne's genius used him, instead of he his genius. This fact may account in part for his using the past as an objective correlative to deal with the realities of the present. It may also account for his use of allegory and various other techniques of romanticism to probe the inner workings of the heart while at the same time he filled his notebooks with realistic tidbits to give materiality and substance to his works. An artist's temperament, of course, must be taken into consideration. But it may be that in the study of Hawthorne not sufficient recognition has been given to the inner workings of Hawthorne's mind and heart to understand his temperament and the particular nature of his artistic genius in regard to the divergencies between his theory of art and artistic practice.

Another possibility is that Hawthorne was not intellectually thorough. Although at times his pressing a moral justifies the charge of his burdening a thin framework with too much thought, as in "Wakefield,"¹ in the last analysis it can be said, ironically perhaps, that Hawthorne evaded conclusions of a metaphysical and theological nature. He was not the kind of artist who believed that an artist should just ask questions. At the same time, he did not always answer some of the philosophical questions that he raised. However, many of the questions that he did not answer intellectually, he answered intuitively by means of his "multiple associations." Allegory and symbolism became means of effecting his multiple associations or artistic ambiguity. By using allegory and symbolism Hawthorne investigated and concluded, but, as said before, primarily he reached his conclusions intuitively and artistically instead of intellectually. Then, surprisingly in view of his critics' once formidable charge that Hawthorne was aloof from society and its problems, one comes to realize that Hawthorne's commitments are more complete and unequivocal on the sociological than on the philosophical level.

Artistic ambiguity in itself is a legitimate artistic device, and in stories such as "Young Goodman Brown" and "The Minister's Black Veil" artistic ambiguity contributes to their artistic value and aesthetic interest. But artistic ambiguity consistently used, especially when

¹ Hyatt H. Waggoner, Hawthorne: A Critical Study (Cambridge, Mass., 1955), p. 86.

philosophical questions are involved, may reflect intellectual equivocation. Intellectual equivocation in a mutual relationship to artistic ambiguity may eventually lead to artistic uncertainty and poor craftsmanship.

The specific purpose of this dissertation is to define Hawthorne's theory of art. To this end his practice and artistic methods will be reviewed in order to point out the chief inconsistencies between his theory and practice. No attempt will be made, however, to analyze Hawthorne's practice for its own sake. Also, problems of artistic method and practice, the execution of any individual work, lie outside the scope of this paper unless the study of such problems of execution contributes directly to the formulation of Hawthorne's theory of art.

All of Hawthorne's critically acknowledged writings are accepted as authoritative sources. In general, Hawthorne's prefaces, letters, and notebooks are the most authoritative documents for Hawthorne's statements about his theory of art. His tales, sketches, and novels may be considered to be just as authoritative whenever they do not contradict the prefaces, notebooks, and letters. His mythological tales are to be taken as secondary unless by consistency or special emphasis they substantiate principles authoritatively set forth in his other writings. In his fiction, the value of each statement and implication must be evaluated carefully on the basis of the technical point of view, the tone, and the work as a whole.

A second matter about the authority of Hawthorne's material is in connection with his comments about all the fine arts. It must be stated that this dissertation is a study of Hawthorne's theory of art in general with particular emphasis, however, on the literary art. Mary Magginis has shown that Hawthorne had a theory of art that applied to the other fine arts as well as to literature, and that Hawthorne's comments on the fine arts were in accord in principle with his statements about literature.² Hawthorne himself did not make distinctions as if he had separate theories for each of the fine arts. In his fiction and in his notebooks he treated the non-literary artist just as much if not more--in terms of space at least--as he did the literary artist.

Matters of bibliographical interest and of textual criticism will not be treated in this paper unless the authority of any evidence is in question. Similarly, biographical material will not be included for its own sake. This study assumes the reader's knowledge of the more general biographical data concerning Hawthorne. Biographical references will be made and data used only in so far as they contribute to the study and understanding of Hawthorne's theory of art.

The historical background of Hawthorne's time and of the settings in his works are also assumed to be part of the reader's general knowledge,

²"Hawthorne's Comments on the Arts as Evidence of an Aesthetic Theory," Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1948).

and this material will be used only as it has a bearing on this particular study of Hawthorne.

The general approach employed in this study is outlined in the Table of Contents. Initially, Hawthorne's beliefs will be reviewed for two reasons. One is that such terms as "truth," "beauty," "moral," "heart," "love," and "warmth" have an essential place in his theory of art. To understand why these concepts are so integral it is necessary to understand their meaning as Hawthorne defined them, and also to understand their importance in his personal philosophy of life. Secondly, a study of Hawthorne's beliefs is basic in order to determine the extent of the connection in Hawthorne between artistic ambiguity and intellectual equivocation, which relationship will help to explain certain discrepancies in theory and practice, the man and the artist.

After a review of Hawthorne's beliefs and a consideration of his comments on art, the artist, the effect of the work on the audience, and the work itself, Hawthorne's theory as he himself chiefly defined it will be compared with his practice as he and his critics have viewed it. Finally, a more thorough investigation will follow the suggestions previously made that for a final understanding of Hawthorne's theory of art, especially as compared at certain main points with his practice, one has to consider Hawthorne's particular temperament and the degree of his intellectual thoroughness.

CHAPTER I

HAWTHORNE'S BELIEFS: DOCTRINAL

Integral to Hawthorne's theory of art are such words as "truth," "moral," "heart," and "warmth." To define them in order to assess their exact value and meaning in Hawthorne's theory of art, it is necessary to review Hawthorne's beliefs or philosophy of life. For when one studies Hawthorne, the close relationship between Hawthorne's personal philosophy of life and his artistic theory becomes immediately evident. For instance, most critics emphasize that Hawthorne began with a moral and then sought an image or a symbol to express it. The question naturally arises, why did Hawthorne begin with a moral? Or if he began with an image one might ask why Hawthorne invariably attached a moral to it? On the one hand, characteristic of Hawthorne's temperament, his creative response was to a moral only.¹ On the other hand, a moral concern and commitment were an essential part of his theory of art.

Another reason for reviewing Hawthorne's beliefs is to draw attention to his tendency to equivocate philosophically. If this tendency is not a cause for artistic ambiguity in his works, it is concomitant. His inclination to be philosophically equivocal may also contribute to an

¹Waggoner, pp. 33-34.

explanation of his failure as an artist in his later years in that he was evidently unable imaginatively and creatively to crystallize his ideas and give them form.

To return to Hawthorne's beliefs, it can be said that Hawthorne instinctively was a religious man. Although his early home environment was Unitarian, in general he absorbed the Calvinistic character of his New England heritage. He never became a professing Calvinist nor a churchman, however. He seldom became doctrinaire in his statements about religion. His chief emphases were the centrality of love, the warmth of the heart, God's providential care, and the certainty of heaven, and his approach to these tenets was to a great extent intuitive. Actually, Hawthorne was more interested in his Puritan ancestry and the New England religious and cultural traditions than in Calvinism itself.

In regard to his personal philosophy of life, Hawthorne's interest in Christianity was non-denominational. Like Melville, Hawthorne accepted historical Christianity as a framework for his intellectual and intuitive deliberations. In that sense Hawthorne objectively accepted it, but concerning the individual doctrines he subjectively made his way among the various points of dogma to accept those which were more compatible with his particular temperament. Waggoner's statement sums up Hawthorne's

religious position quite well.

Historical Christianity, he felt, had been and could properly still be believed with various degrees of "literalness." He was not ready to commit himself on the degree of literalness with which he himself believed it. But he was perfectly ready at all times to assert that the psychological, moral, and social truths embodied in the Christian tradition were too deeply imbedded in the nature of man and of things to be destroyed by enlightened seekers after novelty. . . . While recognizing and sympathizing with the valid claims of the Enlightenment, he was more profoundly in sympathy with the Christian tradition. Except in his last completed novel, The Marble Faun--and even that is only a partial exception--whenever he criticized historic Christianity it was from within its own system of values.²

Very few dogmatic tenets stand out in Hawthorne's beliefs. This observation draws attention to the moral or practical rather than to the theological or doctrinal character of his philosophy of life. In effect he was a moralizer within the Christian tradition. To begin with the doctrine of God, the basic doctrine of classic, traditional Christianity, there is no question about the fact that Hawthorne believed in a personal God. Generally speaking, Hawthorne's concept of God is the God of historical Christianity, specifically the Holy Trinity. The God to whom Hawthorne referred in his personal writings is the same God, i. e., the Triune God, found in those tales and romances that have a Calvinistic-Puritan setting, e. g., The Scarlet Letter, and also in The Marble Faun, which has a combined Calvinistic and Roman Catholic setting. For instance, about Sodoma's fresco of Christ bound to a pillar, Hawthorne remarked: "Really, it is a thing to stand weep at; and yet, by nothing less than (a)

²Ibid., p. 23.

miracle, the great painter has not suffered the Son of God to be merely an object of pity, though depicting him in a state so profoundly pitiful. He is redeemed by a divine majesty and beauty, I know not how, and is as much our Redeemer as if he sat on his throne in heaven."³

Yet the evidence is not complete. Hawthorne neither questioned nor denied the Christian doctrine of the Triune God. He spoke of Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity. But he did not speak of the Spirit or the Spirit of God in such a way as to identify it with the Holy Ghost, the third person of the Trinity. Leonard J. Fick, who made a detailed study of Hawthorne's theology, points out that Hawthorne never really systematized his beliefs or formulated a dogma.⁴ About Hawthorne in respect to the doctrine of the Trinity, Fick states: "I find no adequate proof of a belief in the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. But his belief in a Redeemer, in a Son of God who partakes of the same nature as the Father, is readily demonstrable."⁵ An indication of Hawthorne's acknowledgment of the union of the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ

³Norman H. Pearson, ed., "Nathaniel Hawthorne's French and Italian Notebooks," Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation (Yale University, New Haven, 1941), III, 564. All passages quoted from "The French and Italian Notebooks" are from this edition unless otherwise stated.

⁴The Light Beyond: A Study of Hawthorne's Theology (Westminster, Md., 1955), pp. 4-5.

⁵Ibid., pp. 24-25.

is an intrusive statement in The Marble Faun about Sodoma's head of Christ: "Sodoma, in this matchless picture has done more towards reconciling the incongruity of Divine Omnipotence and outraged, suffering Humanity, combined in one person, than the theologians ever did."⁶

One comes to realize eventually that Hawthorne's indistinctly stated concept of God characterizes him in his apparent unconcern for doctrinal statements. Of course, it is recognized that Hawthorne, a writer of tales and novels, an artist, was under no obligation to formulate his beliefs, let alone to state them publicly. The point is, however, that Hawthorne's disinclination to be precise in the fundamental matters and tenets of his personal philosophy not only emphasizes the difficulty in determining exactly his basic philosophic beliefs, but also calls attention to a habit of mind, a characteristic of his temperament.

To return to Hawthorne's concept of God, it is probable that he was influenced by New England transcendentalism more than he realized. Except for those Unitarians who made a fine distinction between Unitarianism and Transcendentalism, transcendentalists tended to be more general and vague than doctrinally precise about their religious concepts, e. g., the concept of God. It is certain, however, that Hawthorne did not approve of many of the Transcendental views, such as that of the

⁶The Complete Writings of Nathaniel Hawthorne, Old Manse ed. (Boston, [1900] 1903), X, 183. All references to and quotations from Hawthorne's works unless otherwise stated are from this edition, henceforth referred to as Works.

Emersonian Over-Soul. The fact that Hawthorne, as Fick emphasizes, acknowledged Jesus to partake of the same substance as the Father--the divine ousia, whereby Jesus is God as well as man--asserts Hawthorne's disapproval also of the Unitarian's doctrine of God. He accepted, however, without much questioning the concept of God as he received it from the New England Calvinistic-Puritan tradition.⁷

One of Hawthorne's chief emphases about God is His providential care. This emphasis was an important one for Hawthorne evidently, because the tone in his passages about God's providential care suggests a sincerity, a faith, that causes such statements to be more than just expressions of happy sentiment. (Despite the fact that Hawthorne's themes are limited,

⁷Because of some of the commonly held incomplete concepts and definitions of Christianity, perhaps a digression is permissible here in connection with Hawthorne and the doctrine of God. Although brotherly love is a distinguishing characteristic of Christianity, at the risk of being pedantic, it might be well to state that the doctrine of the Trinity not only also characterizes the Christian tradition, but is doctrinally more basic to it. Even though brotherly love is integral to Christian doctrine, love as an indistinct abstract principle is misrepresentative of Christian love. Love is essential to Christianity, and its distinctive mark. But love in Christianity is agape, God's love, which God gives to men through Christ, who by His death and resurrection atoned for men's sins. As the Holy Ghost, by His testimony through the Word and the Sacrament of Baptism, brings men to faith in Christ the Redeemer, men are spiritually reborn. Regenerated Christians then with God's love and with Christ's righteousness in them love one another and even their enemies. In classic Christianity, brotherly love has distinct doctrinal as well as moral implications (1 John 4: 7-11); it is not just an abstract principle. In respect to Hawthorne, his insistence upon the heart's being true to itself and his references to love as a distinctly non-doctrinal abstract principle do not necessarily place him in the tradition of historical Christianity. But he does establish his affinity with it by his relating love for one's fellow-man to one's love for God (cf. Tobias in "The Gentle Boy"), by his beliefs in universal sin and guilt and in heaven and hell, and by his concept of God.

frequency of occurrence cannot always be a reliable criterion for establishing the degree of importance, but tone, of course, is reliable and in some instances tone is the final arbiter.) Hawthorne, as we shall see later, was neither a fatalist nor a skeptic, and his belief was that God was beneficent. If to Hawthorne God's ways at times were inscrutable, it was not the result of any malignity on God's part. The following passage from Hawthorne's American Notebooks not only expresses his somewhat intuitive belief in God's providential care, but also presents in a general way Hawthorne's trust in the positive character of life. It might be stated first that because the doctrinal framework for many of Hawthorne's religious statements is not always precise, such statements as the following may to some people sound quite sentimental. Hawthorne wrote: "The streak of sunshine journeying through the prisoner's cell; it may be considered as something sent from heaven to keep the soul alive and glad within him. And there is something equivalent to this sunbeam in the darkest circumstances; as flowers, which figuratively grow in Paradise, in the dusky room of a poor maiden in a great city; the child, with its sunny smile, is a cherub. God does not let us live anywhere or anyhow on earth, without placing something of Heaven close at hand, by rightly using and considering which, the earthly darkness or trouble will vanish, and all be Heaven."⁸

⁸Randall Stewart, ed. (New Haven, 1932), pp. 97-98. All passages quoted from Hawthorne's American Notebooks are from Stewart's edition unless otherwise stated.

Another question aptly raised is about Hawthorne's standard of truth and morality. One would suppose that Hawthorne, within the tradition of New England Christianity, recognized truth as basically objective. Also one would expect that he acknowledged the Bible as a source if not the only source and standard of truth. Here perhaps one ought to be aware of the fact that he can beg the question by defining Hawthorne's point of view according to the tradition of New England Christianity. Yet the common procedure is tentatively to ascribe points of view to an individual according to the system of thought of which he is a cultural part. Although the individual has not particularly emphasized or enunciated the tenets of that system, one assumes that he accepts them as long as he has not seriously questioned or denied them. For instance, one assumes that an American citizen favors a democratic form of government even though he may not have said anything in particular about the kind and principles of government that he likes best.

To return to the question of Hawthorne's source and standard of truth, Hawthorne apparently was not bothered much by this question. He accepted the Bible as the source of truth and faith, but in a matter-of-fact way, just as he accepted the Christian tradition. As to its divine character and truth, however, Hawthorne did pay tribute. In "Earth's Holocaust," the narrator--presumably Hawthorne--makes the following remark about the failure of the Scriptures to burn: ". . .I beheld among the wallowing flames a copy of the Holy Scriptures, the pages of which, instead of being blackened into tinder, only assumed

a more dazzling whiteness as the finger marks of human imperfection were purified away. Certain marginal notes and commentaries, it is true, yielded to the intensity of the fiery test, but without detriment to the smallest syllable that had flamed from the pen of inspiration."⁹

Hawthorne recognized the Bible as an objective source of truth. The next question is whether his approach to truth was a reliance primarily either on the Holy Spirit and the Bible or on his own intuition and on intuition per se. Hawthorne upheld the dignity and validity of intuition as a means of apprehending truth. In The Scarlet Letter, commenting on the peoples' ethical judgment of Roger Chillingworth, Hawthorne, for all practical purposes if not in actual fact, elevated intuition to the level of Scripture as a source of truth: "But it must now be said--another portion of the community had latterly begun to take its own view of the relation betwixt Mr. Dimmesdale and the mysterious old physician. When an uninstructed multitude attempts to see with its eyes, it is exceedingly apt to be deceived. When, however, it forms its judgment, as it usually does, on the intuitions of its great and warm heart, the conclusions thus attained are often so profound and so unerring as to possess the character of truths supernaturally revealed."¹⁰ Hawthorne did not say actually that the truths arrived at by this intuitive process on the basis of a great and warm heart are

⁹Works, V, 225.

¹⁰Ibid., VI, 180.

equal with those supernaturally revealed, but he dignified them to the point that there is no particular practical difference between them in regard to depth and validity. After occasionally raising the question rather tantalizingly, as in The Scarlet Letter, he let the matter rest.

Much like the transcendentalists of his time, Hawthorne depended upon intuition. Although he was not a transcendentalist, he was basically an intuitionist within the context of New England Christianity.¹¹ Calling attention to the unsystematic character of Hawthorne's personal philosophy and also, for the present interest, to the role of intuition in his religious beliefs, Austin Warren writes: "He never discussed religion with his children. Hawthorne's religion was deep, unanalyzed, inarticulate. For him, the idea of God seems to have been traditional or 'innate,' not arrived at by experience, still less by argument, and consequently incapable of refutation."¹² Without intentionally oversimplifying matters, one might say that Hawthorne's personal concept of religion was quite close to that implied in the doctrinally vague description that he gave of Phoebe when he spoke of her as "a religion in herself, warm, simple, true, with a substance that could walk on

¹¹ Although Hawthorne read Plato and was subject to his influence on the romantic movement in general, there is no evidence that he was under the direct influence of Plato. Hawthorne was a Platonist in so far as he reflected his cultural milieu.

¹² Warren, ed., Nathaniel Hawthorne: Representative Selections (New York, 1934), p. xix.

earth, and a spirit that was capable of heaven."¹³

Certain it is that for all practical purposes, Hawthorne's personal religion was a religion of his own making. He bothered little about formal religion, and he seems to have shied away from anything that demanded undue investigation and effort. In "Sunday at Home," commenting on the occasional words and phrases of the minister's sermon that he could hear, the narrator writes: "The broken and scattered fragments of this one discourse will be the texts of many sermons, preached by those colleague pastors--colleagues, but often disputants--my Mind and Heart. The former pretends to be a scholar, and perplexes me with doctrinal points; the latter takes me on the score of feeling; and both, like several other preachers, spend their strength to very little purpose. I, their sole auditor, cannot always understand them."¹⁴

Hawthorne's aloofness from organized, formal, religion reveals itself in his strong distaste for religious books in general. Musing among old books at the old manse, Hawthorne stated that religious books "so seldom really touch upon their ostensible subject" that they have "little business to be written at all," and as "long as an unlettered soul can attain to saving grace, there would seem to be no deadly error in holding theological libraries to be accumulations of, for the

¹³The House of Seven Gables, Works, VII, 243.

¹⁴Works, I, 22-23.

most part, stupendous impertinence."¹⁵

In reference to the colleague the heart in "Sunday at Home," Hawthorne later developed a more positive attitude toward the heart. For in keeping with his emphases on moral responsibility and the balance of the head and the heart, the centrality of a warm heart became increasingly evident as a mainstay in his personal philosophy of life.

Hawthorne was quite certain about the existence of heaven. To a great extent its importance depended on its being a refuge from and a compensation for the troubles and sorrows of life on earth. His insistence on the positive and constructive character of life and its purpose was in association with his belief in heaven. In the face of what was inscrutable and in recognition of all the troubles and heartache on earth, Hawthorne refused to deny the beneficent character of God and to disavow his certainty of heaven. In his English Notebooks, Hawthorne wrote: "All the misery we endure here constitutes a claim for another life;--and, still more, all the happiness, because all true happiness involves something more than the earth owns, and something more than a mortal capacity for the enjoyment of it."¹⁶ In that respect even, death to Hawthorne--despite all his other thoughts on the subject--was a reminder of life. One of the more pointed statements about life in death and his certainty of another life to come is his comment upon his observing from

¹⁵"The Old Manse," Works, IV, 25.

¹⁶Randall Stewart, ed., (New York, 1941), p. 101. All references to the English Notebooks are to this edition.

a single vantage point both Una and his dying mother.

And now, through the crevice of the curtain, I saw my little Una of the golden locks, looking very beautiful; and so full of spirit and life that she was life itself. And then I looked at my poor dying mother; and seemed to see the whole of human existence at once, standing in the dusty midst of it. Oh what a mockery, if what I saw were all,--let the interval between extreme youth and dying age be filled up with what happiness it might! But God would not have made the close so dark and wretched, if there were nothing beyond; for then it would have been a fiend that created us, and measured out our existence, and not God. It would be something beyond wrong--it would be insult--to be thrust out of life into annihilation in this miserable way. So, out of the very bitterness of death, I gather the sweet assurance of a better state of being.¹⁷

"For Hawthorne," Fogle writes, "heaven is eternity, certainty, perfection, spirit; earth is time, ambiguity, imperfection, matter."¹⁸ The certainty of heaven made hope possible, and the contrast of heaven and earth, life and death, was the setting for the function of hope in this life: "But then that lovely and lightsome little figure of Hope! What in the world could we do without her? Hope spiritualizes the earth; Hope makes it always new; and even in the earth's best and brightest aspect, Hope shows it to be only the shadow of an infinite bliss hereafter!"¹⁹ Hope was akin to the lamp of faith in giving buoyance and direction in this life. Commenting in the night sketch

¹⁷American Notebooks, p. 210.

¹⁸Richard H. Fogle, Hawthorne's Fiction: The Light and the Dark (Norman, 1952), pp. 193-194.

¹⁹"The Paradise of Children," A Wonder Book, Works, XIII, 111.

"Beneath an Umbrella" about a passing figure with a tin lantern, Hawthorne concluded the analogy by saying: "And thus we, night wanderers through a stormy and dismal world, if we bear the lamp of Faith, enkindled at a celestial fire, it will surely lead us home to that heaven whence its radiance was borrowed."²⁰

Along with Hawthorne's insistence on the beneficent God and the certainty of heaven was a faith, instinctive, intuitive, sometimes almost fearfully subjective, but faith, nevertheless, (occasionally a simple child-like trust) in immortality and eventual bliss. This faith was nurtured emotionally and intuitively by many different reminders, such as death or even an ordinary puddle which "pictured heaven below."²¹ On the necessity of this faith for Hawthorne there can be no question. Its presence for the individual made the difference in attitude between death in life and life in death. About the Sabbath sunshine Hawthorne wrote: "Some illusions, and this among them, are the shadows of great truths. Doubts may flit around me, or seem to close their evil wings, and settle down; but, so long as I imagine that the earth is hallowed, and the light of heaven retains its sanctity, on the Sabbath--while that blessed sunshine lives within me--never can my soul have lost the instinct of its faith. If it have gone astray, it will return again."²²

²⁰Works, II, 275.

²¹"The Village Uncle," Works, II, 113.

²²"Sunday at Home," Works, I, 17.

As Mrs. Temple remarked to her son Edward after they had heard the biographical account of Benjamin West, "'Faith is the soul's eye-sight; and when we possess it the world is never dark nor lonely.'"²³

Hawthorne's emphases upon the beneficence of God and the certainty of heaven offset his persistent recognition of the existence of evil. Hawthorne's characters discovered repeatedly the existence and the universality of evil. Young Goodman Brown, Hilda, Ilbrahim, all were shocked and moved by it in various ways. Hawthorne himself in his stories seemed to be aware of evil as an ever-present dark cloud; but as Henry James points out, the notebooks reveal a different kind of person and sensitivity.²⁴ In spite of his emphasis on the presence and the dangers of evil, Hawthorne was neither a fatalist nor a cynic. Hawthorne in certain moods could certainly be fatalistic in attitude, but because he remained constant in his emphasis on the providential care of God and on the hope of heaven he was not a fatalist in the final sense. About the Three Fates of Michaelangelo, Hawthorne remarked:

"They are a great work, containing and representing the very idea that makes a belief in Fate such a cold torture to the human soul. God give me the sure belief in his Providence!"²⁵ For cynics Hawthorne had little sympathy. About the cynic in "The Great Carbuncle," he wrote: "Vain and

²³Biographical Stories, Works, XII, 285.

²⁴Hawthorne (Ithaca, 1956), p. 48.

²⁵French and Italian Notebooks, II, 374-375.

foolish were the motives that had brought most of the adventurers to the Crystal Hills; but none so vain, so foolish, and so impious too, as that of the scoffer with the prodigious spectacles. He was one of those wretched and evil men whose yearnings are downward to the darkness, instead of heavenward, and who, could they but extinguish the lights which God hath kindled for us, would count the midnight gloom their chiefest glory."²⁶

Because of Hawthorne's extensive treatment of evil and the gloominess of guilt, one can readily understand why critics occasionally raise the charge of fatalism and cynicism against him. Similarly, it seems almost reasonable at times that Hawthorne should be accused of skepticism if not outright agnosticism, especially when one reflects on his preponderant reliance on artistic ambiguity.

However, to be aware of the ambiguity of life on earth, to be aware of the fact that there are few questions about which man can give final answers, except on the basis of either his religious faith or a detailed metaphysical system of thought, is not in itself skepticism, nor does it necessarily mark a skeptical attitude. Paradoxically perhaps, Hawthorne portrayed more of a skeptical mind by avoiding the issue than by perceiving the possibility of several answers and then being uncertain as to which was more nearly correct. Although in his refutation of Montégut's charge of pessimism against Hawthorne Henry James over-emphasized Hawthorne's serenity, he sums up fairly well the nature of Hawthorne's character

²⁶Works, I, 210.

in respect to his negative attitudes toward life.

He is not more a pessimist than an optimist, though he is certainly not much of either. He does not pretend to conclude, or to have a philosophy of human nature; indeed, I should even say that at bottom he does not take human nature as hard as he may seem to do. "His bitterness," says Montégut, "is without abatement, and his bad opinion of man is without compensation. . . . His little tales have the air of confessions which the soul makes to itself; they are so many little slaps which the author applies to our face." This, it seems to me, is to exaggerate almost immeasurably the reach of Hawthorne's relish of gloomy subjects. What pleased him in such subjects was their picturesqueness, their rich duskiness of colour, their chiaroscuro; but they were not the expression of a hopeless, or even of a predominantly melancholy, feeling about the human soul. Such at least is my own impression. He is to a considerable degree ironical--this is part of his charm--part even, one may say of his brightness; but he is neither bitter nor cynical--he is rarely even what I call tragical. There have certainly been story-tellers of a gayer and lighter spirit; there have been observers more humorous, more hilarious--though on the whole Hawthorne's observation has a smile in it oftener than may at first appear; but there has rarely been an observer more serene, less agitated by what he sees and less disposed to call things deeply into question. As I have already intimated, his Note-Books are full of this simple and almost childlike serenity.²⁷

Hawthorne, furthermore, was not a determinist. However, he made statements whereby he gave the impression of accepting philosophic determinism for the moment at least--statements which he made no attempt to reconcile with his concept of a beneficent God. Such statements are like the one in "Wakefield": Would that I had a folio to write, instead of an article of a dozen pages! Then might I exemplify how an influence beyond our control lays its strong hand on every deed which we do, and weaves its consequences into an iron tissue of necessity,²⁸ and the

²⁷Hawthorne, pp. 47-48.

²⁸Works, I, 181.

following from The Marble Faun: "'As these busts in the block of marble,' thought Miriam, 'so does our individual fate exist in the limestone of time. We fancy that we carve it out; but its ultimate shape is prior to our action.'"²⁹

About the two statements above, one has to keep in mind that "Wakefield" is a sketch that shows the effect of one who isolates himself from his family and hearth. Wakefield's heart basically was at fault. Although Hawthorne raised the question of an external influence, his chief emphasis was on the immediate causes which he gave for Wakefield's actions, a peculiar vanity and the sluggishness of his heart and mind. Yet Hawthorne did not resolve the ambiguity. In connection with Miriam's statement in The Marble Faun, her propensity toward a deterministic attitude is in keeping with her character, but it is quite improbable that Hawthorne himself other than in sporadic moments of gloom seriously considered determinism.

One can say, however, that Hawthorne did recognize change and chance as active causes for different, sometimes mysterious, and usually unexpected events. In that sense, and on the basis of arguing back from his certainty of God's providential care and his trust in the fact of heaven, it is probable that in some instances by such terms as "preordained" and "unswerving track" Hawthorne referred to change and chance. (Perhaps one should make the distinction between fate and

²⁹Ibid., IX, 158.

chance as they appear to be distinguished for the most part in Hawthorne. "Fate" means determinism, necessity; "chance," however, means that which one cannot understand or explain because he does not see the situation in its entirety.) More than likely, Hawthorne used the various terms without always being either aware of or concerned with the philosophical implications. Although the following statement about Kenyon's view of the irony of life (made at a time when he was unsettled and rather depressed) does not fully clarify the terms, at the same time it presents the matter in a way characteristic of Hawthorne:

. . .there was nothing more definite in the sculptor's plan than that they should let themselves be blown hither and thither like winged seeds, that mount upon each wandering breeze. Yet there was an idea of fatality implied in the simile of the winged seeds which did not altogether suit Kenyon's fancy; for, if you look closely into the matter, it will be seen that whatever appears most vagrant, and utterly purposeless, turns out, in the end, to have been impelled the most surely on a preordained and unswerving track. Chance and change love to deal with men's settled plans, not with their idle vagaries. If we desire unexpected and unimaginable events, we should contrive an iron framework, such as we fancy may compel the future to take one inevitable shape; then comes in the unexpected, and shatters our design in fragments.³⁰

Hawthorne did accept a non-philosophic, modified concept of fatalism and determinism, however, in connection with the universality of evil. Hawthorne exempted no one from the influence of evil and the fact of sin. Like Hilda, one could be shielded from the ugliness of evil for a while, but no one could escape its influence for long. In addition, according to the talkative stranger in "Earth's Holocaust,"

³⁰Ibid., X, 111.

as long as the heart had not been purified each individual would have to be responsible for its control.

It is difficult to determine Hawthorne's exact doctrinal position on the extent of an individual's innate disposition to sin and depravity. To define Hawthorne's concept of sinfulness, it is convenient to determine his concept of grace since the two doctrines are partly interdependent. The difficulty stems particularly from Hawthorne's concept of the nature and function of divine grace for salvation. Generally speaking, Hawthorne seems to be a semi-Pelagian. Aside from his statements on grace itself and statements on the innate characteristics and potentialities of the soul, Hawthorne's failure to make much of God's grace through Christ's work of atonement for all men (objective justification) contributes to the uncertainty about his doctrinal position on innate sinfulness and on the working of divine grace in the lives of men (i. e., a free gift, a cooperative venture, something partially or entirely earned?). The following statement is an example of the difficulty of defining Hawthorne's doctrinal concept of the spiritual character of the soul and, therefore, his related positions on sinfulness and grace: "We will not, then, malign our river as gross and impure while it can glorify itself with so adequate a picture of the heaven that broods above it; or, if we remember its tawny hue and the muddiness of its bed, let it be a symbol that the earthliest human soul has an infinite spiritual capacity and may contain the better world

within its depths."³¹

What, for instance, does Hawthorne mean by "infinite spiritual capacity"? Is man dependent upon grace for the better world that may be contained within the soul's depths? Can man achieve his potentiality himself, either partially or fully, or is he completely helpless and unable to do anything at all spiritually? To Hawthorne, man is definitely tainted and stained with sin, but to what extent and degree it is difficult to say. In addition to such statements as the one quoted above, Hawthorne makes contradictory statements--without later reconciling them--in which he speaks of gaining heaven by God's mercy alone³² and also of gaining heaven by one's own attainment or efforts.³³ Waggoner's statement about man's innate disposition to sin (which resembles the Roman Catholic doctrine) comes about as close as possible to pinning Hawthorne down on this point: ". . .he denies both the 'total depravity' of the Puritans and the natural goodness of the Pelagians and the moderns, preferring instead a position sometimes

³¹"The Old Manse," Works, IV, 8.

³²"He must feel that, when he shall knock at the gate of heaven, no semblance of an unspotted life can entitle him to entrance there. Penitence must kneel, and Mercy come from the footstool of the throne, or that golden gate will never open." (cf. Chapter II, footnote 27) Works, I, 306.

³³"So long as an unlettered soul can attain to saving grace, there would seem to be no deadly error in holding theological libraries to be accumulations of, for the most part, stupendous impertinence." (cf. Chapter I, footnote 15) Works, IV, 25.

described by the theologians as 'natural depravity'--not necessarily 'complete' but universal and inevitable--. . ."34

Although Hawthorne gave a good deal of attention to the Puritan prepossession with sin, he disregarded Calvinistic predestination. His interest was on the more immediately practical application to the life of man of the cause and effect relationship between sin and guilt. In his emphasis on the balance of the head and the heart, Hawthorne also looked for a reconciliation of opposites, and sin was an extremity. One caught in the extremity of sin and evil had become imbalanced, usually by his own inclinations and acts. But even though man was tainted with sin, he was not predetermined to give way to the Satanic impulses of sin and be doomed. Hawthorne thus ignored the logical conclusions of the Calvinist doctrine of absolute predestination to salvation and to damnation.

In recognizing that an individual could choose to close to himself the door of heaven, Hawthorne ascribed to man an independent will and free choice. Although Joseph Schwartz in his study of free will in Hawthorne emphasizes the psychological implications of evil to the point of discounting if not minimizing the theological and moral implications (as James is also inclined to do), he does show that Hawthorne believed in freedom of the will and that "Free will means free choice." Schwartz states also that Hawthorne's "fiction, as well as

³⁴A Critical Study, pp. 15-16.

his non-fictional remarks, suggests that the basis for his personal moral code was a belief in freedom of the will."³⁵

Accepting freedom of the will and free choice, Hawthorne usually made the distinction between the act and the actor, the sin and the sinner. Accordingly, as in "Roger Malvin's Burial," he liked to study the motivations of the guilty person as well as the consequences of the sinful act. In regard to guilt itself, Hawthorne did not attempt either to minimize its force or to explain it away as a psychological phenomenon. To him guilt was just as much a reality of life as it was to Dimmesdale and Reuben Bourne. Guilt inevitably followed the immoral motivation and misdeed, despite Hawthorne's own sympathy with the guilty person and understanding of the motivation.

In keeping with his emphasis on the universality of evil and the horribleness of sin and guilt, Hawthorne pointed out the follies to which human nature subjected a person who was led astray. Hawthorne singled out and analyzed in various degrees the artificiality and vanity of human wishes, and of thoughts and feelings misled by irresponsible mirth and greed. Of all the sins of man, pride to Hawthorne was the worst. The Puritans of The Scarlet Letter were to him an ironic example of pride made more ugly because of their hypocrisy.

Another question in respect to Hawthorne's doctrinal commitment

³⁵"Nathaniel Hawthorne and Freedom of the Will," Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation (University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1952), pp. 382-383.

within the tradition of New England Christianity is his emphasis upon Christ and upon the nature of forgiveness. Hawthorne accepted the historicity of Christ, but doctrinally and morally for the most part disregarded Him. On the basis of his public expression, Hawthorne intellectually acknowledged Christ but intuitively and emotionally did not respond to Him. Concerning atonement, Hawthorne tended to emphasize more the atonement of a sinner by his own suffering than forgiveness by God through Christ. In the following passage from The Marble Faun, Hilda's statement by its tone seems to reflect Hawthorne's own belief about the source and channel of forgiveness: "'Only our Heavenly Father can forgive my sins; and it is only by sincere repentance of whatever wrong I may have done, and by my best efforts toward a higher life, that I can hope for his forgiveness.'" ³⁶ In respect to atonement itself, the passage emphasizes forgiveness from God, but at the same time it seems to indicate that forgiveness is not necessarily a free gift of grace to the repentant, but something given in return for "efforts toward a higher life." (Again there is the semi-Pelagian character of Hawthorne's attitude--which also by the way implicitly excludes Calvinistic predestination.)

Hawthorne's characteristic attitude toward atonement is expressed in "Roger Malvin's Burial" and The Scarlet Letter. The following passage from

³⁶Works, X, 208.

"Roger Malvin's Burial"--perhaps an incident bordering on the extreme--is more suggestive of the revenge code of the Delawares in Cooper's The Pioneers and of Greek tragedy than it is of historical Christianity:

"Then Reuben's heart was stricken, and the tears gushed out like water from a rock. The vow that the wounded youth had made the blighted man had come to redeem. His sin was expiated,--the curse was gone from him; and in the hour when he had shed blood dearer to him than his own, a prayer, the first for years, went up to Heaven from the lips of Reuben Bourne."³⁷ The following passage from The Scarlet Letter about Hester presents more distinctly Hawthorne's attitude about guilt and its atonement: "Here, she said to herself, had been the scene of her earthly punishment; and so, perchance, the torture of her daily shame would at length purge her soul, and work out another purity than that which she had lost; more saint-like, because the result of martyrdom."³⁸ Dimmesdale's suffering and final confession, Hollingsworth's living with the knowledge of his guilt, and Donatello's imprisonment further substantiate Hawthorne's attitude about purgation and atonement as indicated by Hester's statement.

Another question concerning Hawthorne's doctrinal stand is about his concept of felix culpa. Critics single out Pearl and Hilda as two examples, especially the latter, of Hawthorne's working out the possibility of

³⁷Ibid., V, 165.

³⁸Ibid., VI, 114.

felix culpa. Pearl, in The Scarlet Letter, is associated too much with the idea of amoral nature to have serious significance for the possibility of the fortunate fall.³⁹ Hilda, however, learned what the realities of life really were when she came to know about Miriam and Donatello's guilt. More specifically, in regard to Donatello, Hawthorne suggested that by his gnawing knowledge of sin Donatello came to a realization of his moral and intellectual capabilities which otherwise he may never have suspected.

Hawthorne considered the possibility of felix culpa particularly by means of Hilda and Kenyon's discussion of it in the last part of The Marble Faun. By speaking through both Kenyon and Hilda, Hawthorne in effect created a dialogue that could have taken place within his own mind.

"Here comes my perplexity," continued Kenyon. "Sin has educated Donatello, and elevated him. Is sin, then,--which we deem such a dreadful blackness in the universe,--is it, like sorrow, merely an element of human education, through which we struggle to a higher and purer state than we could otherwise have attained? Did Adam fall, that we might ultimately rise to a far loftier paradise than his?"

"O hush!" cried Hilda, shrinking from him with an expression of horror which wounded the poor, speculative sculptor to the soul. "This is terrible; and I could weep for you, if you indeed believe it. Do not you perceive what a mockery your creed makes, not only of all religious sentiments, but of moral law? and how it annuls and obliterates whatever precepts of Heaven are written deepest within us? You have shocked me beyond words!"

³⁹For instance, note Chillingworth's statement about Pearl: "'There is no law, nor reverence for authority, no regard for human ordinances or opinions, right or wrong, mixed up with that child's composition,' remarked he, as much to himself as to his companion [Dimmesdale]." Works, VI, 190.

"Forgive me, Hilda!" exclaimed the sculptor, startled by her agitation; "I never did believe it! But the mind wanders wild and wide; and, so lonely as I live and work, I have neither pole-star above nor light of cottage windows here below, to bring me home. Were you my guide, my counsellor, my inmost friend, with that white wisdom which clothes you as a celestial garment, all would go well. O Hilda, guide me home!"⁴⁰

The conclusion is somewhat equivocal, but the upshot is that although Hawthorne realized the attainment of knowledge by means of evil (essentially, a sadder knowledge), he could not quite bring himself to the acceptance of felix culpa as such. But he did not actually come out and renounce it.

However, in spite of his emphasis on human guilt and moral awareness, the idea is not within the spirit of Hawthorne. In consideration of Hawthorne's entire philosophy of life, in so far as one can determine his doctrinal stance, it appears that Warren's conclusion is quite just to Hawthorne's total attitudes and entire frame of mind about the effect of sin on man: "Sin may be forgiven by God; softened by penitence; still its stains persist; and its permanent effect is not educative but warping."⁴¹ In this respect, one might recall that Hilda could no longer in her imitations get at the essence of the masters; the untouched sympathy within her had been altered. Although the tone of the following passage is not too forcefully Hawthorne's, it does present a point of view that is typical of Hawthorne: "'No act,'

⁴⁰Ibid., X, 349-350.

⁴¹Representative Selections, p. xxix.

continued Mr. Franklin, 'can possibly be for the benefit of the public generally which involves injustice to any individual. It would be easy to prove this by examples. . . .And I do verily believe, Benjamin, that almost all the public and private misery of mankind arises from a neglect of this great truth--that evil can produce only evil,--that good ends must be wrought out by good means.'⁴² In this regard, Dimmesdale found relief only after he had confessed his sin, not in spite of his confession.

Hawthorne was wary of doctrinal codes. Although he would intuitively adhere tenaciously to a belief, e. g., his insistence on God's goodness and care and the certainty of heaven, he shied away from doctrinal statements. No doubt, Hawthorne's inclination in this respect disclosed a characteristic of his temperament. Possibly, he tended to be fearful of the more sobering metaphysical investigations that Melville found a necessity.

Hawthorne did not intellectually withdraw within himself at any particular time. There is no evidence that at some period in this life he changed his interest from the doctrinal to the non-doctrinal moral implications of life. As William White, in his study of Hawthorne's personal philosophy, asserts, Hawthorne's thought pattern was a constant one. Presumably, Hawthorne's manner of thinking, the scope of his immediate interests, and the emphases in his personal philosophy were

⁴²Biographical Stories, Works, XII, 341.

naturally rather than self-consciously developed, and in that respect they reflect the character of his temperament: the psychological composition of his intellect and emotions. White remarks:

The Hawthornian thought pattern seemingly has no beginning, no middle period, and no end. It evolves by feeding itself on new observations, but that evolution consists of elaboration and solidification rather than change. An interpretation of the Hawthorne mind which would conveniently compartmentalize its development into different chronological periods has little basis in fact. Certainly the mind matured, but it advanced in an almost predetermined fashion. The overpowering oneness of Hawthorne's thought cannot be ignored. The change which marriage and literary recognition brought about need not be minimized, but they were not of sufficient import to substantially alter the fundamental thought pattern. Those aspects of life which Hawthorne accentuated were set down with a thoroughgoing consistency.⁴³

Hawthorne's interest revealed itself not in the objective and doctrinaire enunciation of reality and truth, but in the subjective moral implications of truth. He was interested in the sittliche Lauterkeit, the moral quality of truthfulness. He dealt with the realities of life, but morally in a tentative way rather than theologically and metaphysically in a more absolute sense. Seymour Gross writes that "The moral shadows in Hawthorne's fiction are never cast in the form of theological problems; unlike Melville, Hawthorne seems never to have grappled with the nature and existence of God. In his writing, the emphasis is always on the dangers, difficulties, contradictions, and

⁴³"The Personal Philosophy of Nathaniel Hawthorne," Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation (University of Florida, Gainesville, 1953), pp. 263-264.

paradoxes involved in man's meeting the conditions."⁴⁴

As to his method of approaching morally the exigencies of life for evolving a practical moral philosophy of life, Vega Curl in Pasteboard Masks has the following to say:

The major problem of existence, as he saw it against his Puritan background, was a moral one, the relation of man to the attainment of spiritual values. And such a problem is not incapable of a pragmatic solution. Hawthorne deals with it, not as a matter of theory, but as a process of drawing more or less tentative conclusions from the facts of human life. The end that he sets himself, instead of being an attempt to synthesize all truths into one great fundamental truth of existence, is to show what seems to be the reality of man's relation to life, as worked out through ordinary experience with sin and regeneration.

Melville set himself a harder and less satisfactory task. With him the problem goes beyond the moral to the metaphysical.⁴⁵

Although Hawthorne did not probe as Melville did, one must recognize that Hawthorne understood the realities as Melville saw them and that he also understood Melville's compulsion to wrestle with them. Hawthorne temperamentally was not inclined to enter the ring for a showdown. However, he was subject to the necessity of closely investigating the moral implications and therefore to chart a direction for life on earth until relieved and paradoxically consummated in heaven.

⁴⁴Gross, ed., A Scarlet Letter Handbook (Belmont, Calif., 1960), pp. 5-6.

⁴⁵Pasteboard Masks: Fact as Spiritual Symbol in the Novels of Hawthorne and Melville, Monograph (Cambridge, Mass., 1931), p. 14.

CHAPTER II

HAWTHORNE'S BELIEFS: MORAL

Throughout Hawthorne's works, one finds no moral standard that is systematically defined. Possibly again, one might question the point of determining the source and standard of Hawthorne's moral code, but the questioning, at the risk of being doctrinaire, is valid because Hawthorne emphasized so consistently the moral implications of men's motivations and actions. In general, Hawthorne's moral standard was the moral tradition of Christianity, which is based on the Ten Commandments and related moral precepts. In a more immediate sense, Hawthorne's concept of moral right and justice was comprised of whatever morally contributed to a full life on earth.

Although throughout his works Hawthorne emphasized moral principles, such as "truth," "justice," and "love," he did not deal with the source and standard of morality in a detailed way. Occasionally, he criticized a too definite distinction between right and wrong. Concerning the Puritans, Hawthorne consistently criticized their over-emphasis on externals and their frequent failure to consider circumstances and motivations, the internal conditions of the heart and mind.

He even went so far in The Marble Faun as to question indirectly whether there could be any real distinction between right and wrong. After Hilda had become disillusioned and had her eyes opened to the horrors of evil, she proclaimed to Kenyon: "'This thing, as regards its causes, is all a mystery to me, and must remain so. But there is, I believe, only one right and one wrong; and I do not understand, and may God keep me from ever understanding, how two things so totally unlike can be mistaken for one another; nor how two mortal foes, as Right and Wrong surely are, can work together in the same deed. This is my faith. . .'"¹

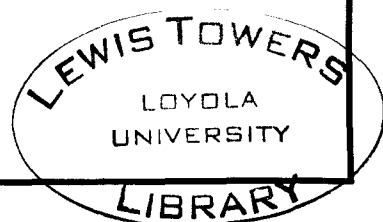
In evaluating this passage to determine its degree of finality and its tone for an indication of Hawthorne's belief, one has to recognize that the tone is distinctly Hilda's although there is little doubt that Hawthorne sympathized with her in her questioning. Hilda's comment reflects shock and disillusionment. Certainly her neat little world of nicely categorized distinctions between right and wrong was limited and inadequate. However, one must keep in mind that the chief problem for Hilda was that she for the first time faced evil unexpectedly in all its ugliness. Furthermore, one must remember that poetic justice worked out in The Marble Faun, as it invariably does in Hawthorne's works. After Miriam recognized her guilt, she imposed a judgment and a restriction upon herself; and Donatello submitted to imprisonment. What Hilda learned, and this returns us to Hawthorne's point, is that because of

¹Works, X, 244.

the universality of evil and men's predisposition to it, what appears to be categorically distinctive in respect to right and wrong turns out to be part of a more complex system of circumstances and motivations. It must be said also that Hilda was being criticized not so much for her belief in the distinction between right and wrong as for her rigid judgments and her lack of mercy: "'Alas for poor human nature, then!'" said Kenyon sadly, and yet half smiling at Hilda's unworldly and impracticable theory. 'I always felt you, my dear friend, a terribly severe judge, and have been perplexed to conceive how such tender sympathy could coexist with the remorselessness of a steel blade. You need no mercy, and therefore know not how to show any!'"²

Developing his practical philosophy, Hawthorne declined to relinquish a certain degree of moral freedom. Again, one has to make the distinction between external and internal morality. The following passage from The Scarlet Letter describes Hester's sense of moral freedom, which in some respects was forced upon her: "But Hester Prynne, with a mind of native courage and activity, and for so long a period not merely estranged, but outlawed from society, had habituated herself to such latitude of speculation as was altogether foreign to the clergyman. She had wandered, without a rule or guidance, in a moral wilderness; as vast, as intricate and shadowy, as the untamed forest, amid the gloom of which they were now holding a colloquy that

²Ibid.



was to decide their fate. Her intellect and heart had their home, as it were, in desert places, where she roamed as freely as the wild Indian in his woods."³

Since after her sin of adultery Hester maintained her relationship with the Puritan community and since she never denounced the New England Calvinistic faith, her wandering in "a moral wilderness" was conditioned to an extent. Her moral freedom then was not absolute. She roamed freely within the framework of her heritage and moral-cultural environment--just as the Indian was free to roam in his woods. Hester's reaction, however, was to the external code of society. Although Hawthorne in The Scarlet Letter symbolically dramatized the contradiction between moral law and natural law, in some respects natural law was in accord with the internal moral code of the Puritans. Natural law supported Hester and Dimmesdale's alliance because it was natural in opposition to the unnatural marriage of Hester and Chillingworth and their lack of love. However, nature sympathized with Hester whereas the Puritans did not. Having developed the letter of the moral law at the expense of the spirit of the law, the Puritans' judgment was according to an external code, and, therefore, unnatural and unjust. The implication of the dramatic conflict is that the code of society ought to be in harmony with that of nature, and that in general it could be if people would observe internally their moral laws. Moral freedom to Hawthorne meant essentially the freedom

³Ibid., VI, 288.

to be positive and to reach fulfillment.

In sympathizing with Hester, one need not assume the necessity of denouncing spiritual authority and a formal moral code, for The Scarlet Letter renounces the pride of the Puritans and their external emphasis on morality--both of which are explicitly and implicitly dramatized throughout the novel--rather than spiritual authority and a moral code. In the novel, Hawthorne typically did not deal with nor concern himself with the source and standard of morality, but he was keenly interested in the working out of that morality. He was interested in the internal morality of the heart and mind as it affected external life.

To Hawthorne, a code was ineffective if it was external or intellectual only. Unless one's sense of right and wrong penetrated the heart and struggled with the realities of life, the results were invalid and unreal. In "Earth's Holocaust," he indicated his emphasis:

"What but the human heart itself?" said the dark-visaged stranger, with a portentous grin. "And, unless they hit upon some method of purifying that foul cavern, forth from it will reissue all the shapes of wrong and misery--the same old shapes or worse ones--which they have taken such a vast deal of trouble to consume to ashes. I have stood by this livelong night and laughed in my sleeve at the whole business. O, take my word for it, it will be the old world yet!"

This brief conversation supplied me with a theme for lengthened thought. How sad a truth, if truth it were, that men's age-long endeavor for perfection had served only to render him the mockery of the evil principle! The heart, the heart,--there was the little yet boundless sphere, and the many shapes of evil that haunt the outward, and which now seem almost our only realities, will turn to shadowy phantoms and vanish of their own accord; . . .⁴

⁴Ibid., V, 227-228.

As Warren wrote about Hawthorne's attitude toward the heart, "Fine theories will not save men: nor will legislation. The heart must undergo regeneration, and God (who alone can effect that) bides his own time."⁵

The integrity of the heart was central to Hawthorne's entire moral philosophy of life including his aesthetic principles. In fact his moral emphases on the heart, warmth, sympathy, and love are the points that especially relate Hawthorne's theory of art to his personal philosophy of life in so far as it is or can be distinct from his aesthetic views. Although for Hawthorne, the concepts of "beauty," "love," "heart," "sympathy," etc. are fundamentally moral, in his theory of art the aesthetic and the moral concepts of these terms are the same.

To Hawthorne after the heart was once moved, then one began to live. About himself he wrote:

And now I begin to understand why I was imprisoned so many years in this lonely chamber, and why I could never break through the viewless bolts and bars; for if I had sooner made my escape into the world, I should have grown hard and rough, and been covered with earthly dust, and my heart might have become callous by rude encounters with the multitude. . . . But living in solitude till the fulness of time was come, I still kept the dew of my youth and the freshness of my heart. . . . I used to think I could imagine all passions, all feelings, and states of the heart and mind; but how little did I know! . . . Indeed, we are but shadows; we are not endowed with real life, and all that seems most real about us is but the thinnest substance of a dream,--till the heart be touched. That touch creates us,--then we begin to be,--thereby we are beings of reality and inheritors of eternity.⁶

⁵Representative Selections, p. xlvii.

⁶American Notebooks, ed. Sophia Hawthorne, Works, XVIII, 281-282.

Since knowledge brings loss of innocence (cf. Hilda) and often sadness (cf. Donatello), one can never regain the original state of innocence. As the narrator said to little Annie in "Little Annie's Ramble," there comes a time when--in terms of moral knowledge--a person can no longer turn back: ". . .forget not to thank Heaven, my Annie, that, after wandering a little way into the world, you may return at the first summons, with an untainted and unwearied heart, and be a happy child again. But I have gone too far astray for the town crier to call me back."⁷

The preceding two quotations bring to attention an essential ambiguity in Hawthorne, even as it affects his philosophy of the heart. He believed that when a person began "to be," to live, that then he was a being of reality and an inheritor of eternity. Because of the tension between living in reality and being an inheritor of eternity, which Hawthorne fully realized, the position is an ambiguous one. The position is also ambiguous because he did not support it with either a theological or metaphysical base. In effect, Hawthorne walked a moral tightrope. Believing that a person had to wander into the world in which because of the universality of evil there was a point of no return, Hawthorne relied on balance to maintain moral equilibrium.

Balance in Hawthorne meant placing a check on the knowledge and experiences that by their inordinate intensity upset one's moral

⁷Works, I, 170.

equilibrium. Ethan Brand, at the sacrifice of love and sympathy, became intellectually proud. In his disillusionment, Young Goodman Brown fell into hopeless despair. Rappaccini failed to balance his selfish scientific curiosity with love and respect for others including his daughter. In "The Gentle Boy," Catherine, having severed human ties, became more fanatic. According to Hawthorne, from the beginning of one's life he has to maintain a sense of balance--such as those of the head and the heart, the individual and society--in order to prevent the sacrifice of one aspect of life for another. As one matures by means of his experiencing life, inclinations to give way to one element over another become more subtle, and the necessity of the balance becomes more crucial. Waggoner remarks that "[t]he tales assert both the fact and the obligation of interdependence. As the penalty for the greatest evil in Hawthorne's work is alienation, so the reward most to be desired is the reunion that comes when pride is conquered and head and heart work together to find freedom in acceptance of dependence."⁸

Interdependence and balance for Hawthorne were means of reconciliation. In effect, in regard to the questions that Hawthorne raised, they became means of resolution, but resolutions that were more immediately practical than final. Further, the moral balance of the head and heart characterized the quiet heart. To Hawthorne, the quiet heart that could

⁸Waggoner, ed., Nathaniel Hawthorne: Selected Tales and Sketches (New York, 1950), p. xix.

"make a dog-day temperate"⁹ enabled one to find fulfillment and to realize the moral enjoyment that life had to offer.

Just as Hawthorne's emphasis on the heart was integral to his informal, intuitive approach to a standard of morality, his concept of the heart and its function was central to his concern about the moral implications of truth. At the same time, truth for all practical purposes came to mean that which was morally good or that which enabled one to have "heart."

Intuitively, he made his way, and truth in the absolute sense became a secondary consideration. To Hawthorne, the important consideration was a knowledge and the courage--the ability--to meet the realities of life as reflected in the day to day moral crises of life. His answers were intuitively and artistically arrived at, and often their depth and at the same time, paradoxically, their lack of finality were characterized by his repeated use of artistic ambiguity. Frederick Olsen writes: "In some respects, Hawthorne's best writing shows a relationship to that of existential writers, not, of course as a formal philosophical position, but as a writer's conception of reality. He insisted that the moral universe was the 'really real' and that it could not be rationally understood. This conception is firmly rooted in the way in which he incorporates his conventional material into his texture as well as in the plots of the stories and sketches themselves. His

⁹"The Toll-Gatherer's Day," Works, I, 284.

successful work leaves indefinite doubt; he crosses meaning with meaning so that there is no escape except the way that he has prepared. One cannot know, one must have 'heart.'¹⁰

Attempting to develop the integrity of the heart and searching for a full life in the face of death, Hawthorne was a realist much in the tradition of such metaphysical poets as John Donne. Waggoner's comment on this point is that "death haunted Hawthorne, not in quite the same way that it did Poe, in terms of the horror of physical decay, but as it did Samuel Johnson and John Donne, as the most striking evidence of evanescence in a world where all was slipping and sliding into ruin."¹¹ Consequently, "there is a world of difference between the portrayals of Roderick Usher and Coverdale or Young Goodman Brown, the difference between real morbidity and real health. Hawthorne had too much insight, too much capacity for self-criticism, to enjoy the posture of the young man in love with, or terrified by, death. If he himself felt its presence rather more strongly and frequently than he felt the reality of life, he knew that it was but one of several fundamental perceptions that man could lose sight of only at his peril."¹²

In his stories, Hawthorne reflected the moral guardian's pre-occupation with pitfalls: "His sense of the heights to which human

¹⁰"Hawthorne's Integration of Methods and Materials," Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation (Indiana Univ., Bloomington, 1960), p. 239.

¹¹A Critical Study, p. 25.

¹²Ibid., p. 27.

beings can rise was an intermittent one; his sense of the depths to which they can fall, of the maze of error in which they can wander, was steady and fascinated. What it means to be in harmony with things and with oneself--of this he had his own intuition, and there are gleams of it on his pages. For him, however, it was a far more characteristic intuition, a far more continuous experience to understand what it means to be in the wrong." ¹³

It is too easy to be in the wrong. There is too much wrong in the world. In such a world Hawthorne was not so much interested in objective truth in the absolute sense as in the moral implications of the truth of existence and the crises of life. Truth became an intuitive sensibility as to how to live, how to conduct one's life, how to be in harmony with oneself. William Dean Howells sums up rather well the burden of truth for Hawthorne and also the framework of his artistic (and intuitive) investigations: "But none of Hawthorne's fables are without a profound and distant reach into the recesses of nature and of being. He came back from his researches with no solution of the question, with no message, indeed, but the awful warning, 'Be true, be true,' which is the burden of The Scarlet Letter; yet in all his books there is the hue of thoughts that we think only in the presence of the mysteries of life and death."¹⁴ The moral gloom so often charged against Hawthorne in the

¹³ Newton Arvin, ed., Hawthorne's Short Stories (New York, 1946), p. xvi.

¹⁴ "George Eliot, Hawthorne, Goethe, Heine," My Literary Passions, in The Writings of Wm. D. Howells, Library ed., VI (New York, 1895), p. 140.

last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the present century can be understood against the background of Hawthorne's Donne-like perception of death without the classic stance of Donne's faith.

Although Hawthorne did not rest easily with dogmatic answers, he was far from accepting the easy solutions of contemporary transcendentalism. He could not accept, for instance, the concept of the relativity of evil. Hawthorne's reaction to the modernism of his day is expressed in "The Celestial Railroad." He called Mr. Smooth-it-away an "impudent fiend," who had the audacity to "deny the existence of Tophet, when he felt its fiery tortures raging within his own breast."¹⁵ Randall Stewart points out that to Hawthorne transcendentalism ignored "the fallible, sinful nature of man, the life-and-death struggle between good and evil in human society and in the private breast, the inexorable influence of earlier modes and habits which form a predestinating chain of causality. The triumph of virtue and the good life would not be as easy as many people seemed to think. The evidence of history and of contemporary society appeared incompatible with the sudden metamorphosis of mankind."¹⁶

On the basis of the narrator's remarks in The Blithedale Romance, Hawthorne, however, did not regret his brief experience at Brook Farm: "Therefore, if we built splended castles (phalansteries perhaps they might be more fitly called), and pictured beautiful scenes, among the

¹⁵Works, IV, 288.

¹⁶Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Biography (New Haven, 1948), p. 244.

fervid coals of the hearth around which we were clustering, and if all went to rack with the crumbling embers and have never since arisen out of the ashes, let us take to ourselves no shame. In my own behalf, I rejoice that I could once think better of the world's improvability than it deserved. It is a mistake into which men seldom fall twice in a lifetime; or, if so, the rarer and higher is the nature that can thus magnanimously persist in error."¹⁷

Hawthorne remained a realist with a sense of moral balance, but with a practical synthesis rather than a final solution:

It must be emphasized that there is no [intellectual] synthesis in Hawthorne's thinking, only thesis and antithesis in balance. He reacted against the easy and optimistic solutions of liberalism and Emersonian transcendentalism, which left out some of the pieces in order to put the puzzle together. His only reconciliation is acceptance of life's differences and contradictions. The solution he offers is the moral at the end of "The Birthmark": heaven exists and earth exists--accept your human imperfections, and wait. The lot of man is "care and sorrow, and troubled joy," but there is perfection elsewhere. Life is heaven, and earth--and neither of these can be ignored. This theme in itself might seem a solution. The difficulty is, however, that man wants heaven immediately. This irrational desire he cannot master, but can only hold in check at best.¹⁸

Because of Hawthorne's moral sensibility to the realities of life, he perceived the shallowness of the work of many social reformers. As Russell Kirk writes, Hawthorne was convinced that moral reformation was "the only real reformation; that sin will always corrupt the projects of enthusiasts who leave it out of account; that progress is a delusion,

¹⁷Works, VIII, 23-24.

¹⁸Fogle, Hawthorne's Fiction, p. 192.

except for the infinitely slow progress of conscience."¹⁹ Hawthorne, highly skeptical of reformers, wrote that "many of them had got possession of some crystal fragment of truth, the brightness of which so dazzled them that they could see nothing else in the wide universe."²⁰ Referring to Hollingsworth in particular and reformers in general, Coverdale in The Blithedale Romance wrote the following about those who have "surrendered themselves to an overruling purpose":

It does not so much impel them from without, nor even operate as a motive power within, but grows incorporate with all that they think and feel, and finally converts them into little else save that one principle. When such begins to be the predicament, it is not cowardice, but wisdom, to avoid these victims. They have no heart, no sympathy, no reason, no conscience. They will keep no friend, unless he make himself the mirror of their purpose; they will smite and slay you, and trample your dead corpse under foot, all the more readily, if you take the first step with them, and cannot take the second, and the third, and every other step of their terribly straight path. They have an idol to which they consecrate themselves high priest, and deem it holy work to offer sacrifices of whatever is most precious; and never once seem to suspect--so cunning has the Devil been with them--that his false deity--in whose iron features, immitigable to all the rest of mankind, they see only benignity and love, is but a spectrum of the very priest himself, projected upon the surrounding darkness. And the higher and purer the original object, and the more unselfishly it may have been taken up, the slighter is the probability that they can be led to recognize the process by which godlike benevolence has been debased into all-devouring egotism.²¹

One additional reason that to Hawthorne enthusiastic reformers become moral monsters is that they who assumed positions of leadership, like old Matthew Maule and many of the influential classes, became

¹⁹"The Moral Conservatism of Hawthorne," Contemp. Rev., CLXXXII (Dec. 1952), 365.

²⁰"Hall of Fantasy," Works, IV, 251.

²¹Ibid., VIII, 98-99.

"martyrs to that terrible delusion, which should teach us, among its other morals, that the influential classes, and those who take upon themselves to be leaders of the people, are fully liable to all the passionate error that has ever characterized the maddest mob."²²

Although Hawthorne disdained social reformers, he was not at all anti-social. Whereas Hawthorne had to make a personal adjustment to society after having isolated himself for ten years, he never encouraged isolation, nor did he question the value and benefits of social influence. In a letter to Longfellow (June 4, 1837), he wrote: "By some witchcraft or other--for I really cannot assign any reasonable why and wherefore--I have been carried apart from the main current of life, and find it impossible to get back again. Since we last met. . .I have secluded myself from society; and yet I never meant any such thing, nor dreamed what sort of life I was going to lead. I have made a captive of myself and put me into a dungeon; and now I cannot find the key to let myself out--and if the door were open, I should be almost afraid to come out. . .there is no fate in this world so horrible as to have no share in either its joys or sorrows. For the last ten years, I have not lived, but only dreamed about living!"²³

To a degree Hawthorne himself experienced what he wrote in conclusion about Wakefield, although certainly Hawthorne did not become an

²²The House of Seven Gables, Works, VII, 5.

²³American Notebooks, p. lxviii.

outcast: "Amid the seeming confusion of our mysterious world, individuals are so nicely adjusted to a system, and systems to one another and to a whole, that, by stepping aside for a moment, a man exposes himself to a fearful rush of losing his place forever. Like Wakefield, he may become, as it were, the Outcast of the Universe."²⁴

Man, to Hawthorne, needed society to maintain balance, to stay on the right track in life. It was a "cold and solitary thought" for man to "soar up into the very zenith, where man never breathed, nor eagle ever flew, and where the ethereal azure melts away from the eye, and appears only a deepened shade of nothingness!"²⁵ About the painter in "The Prophetic Pictures" Hawthorne wrote: "It is not good for man to cherish a solitary ambition. Unless there be those around him by whose examples he may regulate himself, his thoughts, desires, and hopes will become extravagant, and be the semblance, perhaps the reality, of a madman."²⁶

Hawthorne further believed that no one should denounce his fellow-man because no individual could say that he himself was not stained with guilt: "Man must not disclaim his brotherhood, even with the guiltiest, since, though his hand be clean, his heart has surely been polluted by the flitting phantoms of iniquity. He must feel that, when he shall knock at the gate of heaven, no semblance of an unspotted life can

²⁴Works, I, 186.

²⁵"Sights From a Steeple," Works, I, 258.

²⁶Works, I, 242-243.

entitle him to entrance there. Penitence must kneel, and Mercy come from the footstool of the throne, or that golden gate will never open."²⁷

Isolation, particularly the isolation resulting from guilt, became an almost unbearable solitude, and in turn pointed up the need for the intimate communion of friendship and love with and for one's fellowman. About the gulf between Miriam and her friends, Hilda and Kenyon, Hawthorne wrote: "This perception of an infinite, shivering solitude, amid which we cannot come close enough to human beings to be warmed by them, and where they turn to cold, chilly shapes of mist, is one of the most forlorn results of any accident, misfortune, crime, or peculiarity of character, that puts an individual ajar with the world. Very often, as in Miriam's case, there is an incompatible instinct that demands friendship, love, and intimate communion, but is forced to pine in empty forms; a hunger of the heart, which finds only shadows to feed upon."²⁸

Basic was reciprocal love and what Ethan Brand especially lacked, the "key of holy sympathy."²⁹ About Hawthorne's emphasis upon the heart and on love, Newton Arvin writes:

The picture of human life that emerges from his work is naturally, as he himself would say, a "dusky" one, but it would be very shallow to label Hawthorne, in hackneyed language, a "pessimistic" or "misanthropic" writer: with all his limitations, he went too deep for sentimental pessimism or facile cynicism.

²⁷"Fancy's Show Box," Works, I, 306.

²⁸The Marble Faun, Works, IX, 154-155.

²⁹"Ethan Brand," Works, III, p. 135.

He took a dark view but not a low one of human nature; he took a doubtful not a despairing view of the human prospect. He called himself "a thoroughgoing democrat," and certainly the adoption of this creed, as he says elsewhere, requires no scanty share of faith in the ideal. In his way, which was not the "optimistic" one, he had such faith. He had no faith in or respect for the forms and the forces that separate men from one another or distinguished sharply among them; he had no respect whatever for ranks or classes that serve only too often to keep men apart. His real faith, quite "paradoxically," was in what he called the heart. Much that he saw there was terrible enough, but humanly speaking he believed in nothing else--in nothing that is, except in the capacities that equalize instead of divide men, in the affections that draw them together, in imaginative sympathy and the sense of a common brotherhood in error and suffering. His conviction is quite clear that what is wrong can be righted by nothing unless by love.³⁰

Hawthorne was quite idealistic about love for its therapeutic value and also as a quality that on earth borders on the absolute. Love finally was the touchstone of life and made life genuinely real. As Marius Bewley says in reference to the "New Adam and Eve": "This inner sphere of reciprocal love or affection is the domain of Hawthorne's reality--the only reality that he ever admits without qualification. About everything else, the world of the senses in which man lives and the world of abstract thought from which he builds his systems, Hawthorne cherishes the profoundest doubts."³¹ But the world of love endured. In The House of Seven Gables, after Phoebe and Holgrave declared their mutual love, Hawthorne wrote: "And it was in this hour, so full of doubt and awe, that the one miracle was wrought, without

³⁰Short Stories, pp. xvii-xviii.

³¹"Hawthorne and 'The Deeper Psychology,'" Mandrake, II (Autumn-Winter 1955-56), 368.

which every human existence is a blank. The bliss which makes all things true, beautiful, and holy shone around this youth and maiden. They were conscious of nothing sad nor old. They transfigured the earth, and made it Eden again, and themselves the first dwellers in it. The dead man, so close beside them was forgotten. At such a crisis, there is no death; for immortality is revealed anew, and embraces everything in its hallowed atmosphere."³²

Even in a more "modern" existence love could conquer some of the harsh realities of life and in some instances as in "The Birthmark" accomplish that which science could not. Hawthorne suggested that genuine love in effect could have done away with the birthmark, the one blot of imperfection to remind Aylmer of Georgiana's earthly existence: "In the usual state of her complexion--a healthy though delicate bloom--the mark wore a tint of deeper crimson, which imperfectly defined its shape amid the surrounding rosiness. When she blushed it gradually became more indistinct, and finally vanished amid the triumphant rush of blood that bathed the whole cheek with its brilliant glow. But if any shifting motion caused her to turn pale, there was the mark again, a crimson stain upon the snow, in what Aylmer sometimes deemed an almost fearful distinctness."³³

And yet, in spite of his persistent ideal view of love, Hawthorne

³²Works, VII, 448-449.

³³Ibid., IV, 50.

never lost the sense of the actualities of life. Edith's mystery in "The Maypole of Merry Mount" was that real love is known and experienced only in the actual world of both trouble and joy, and not in the world of pleasure and make-believe: "Just then, as if a spell had loosened them, down came a little shower of withering rose leaves from the Maypole. Alas, for the young lovers! No sooner had their hearts glowed with real passion than they were sensible of something vague and unsubstantial in their former pleasures, and felt a dreary presentiment of inevitable change. From the moment that they truly loved, they had subjected themselves to earth's doom of care and sorrow, and troubled joy, and had no more a home at Merry Mount. That was Edith's mystery."³⁴

But in the face of all the harsh actualities of life, Hawthorne consistently prescribed love as the cure. Robert Durr in "Hawthorne's Ironic Mode" writes that in "those passages or stories depicting aspects of the transcendental, reformist motive, or where he deals with the illusions of piety and respectability, his point of regard is his conviction of evil as fundamental in human nature, the dark heart. But when his theme involves the dangers to heart and soul of a monomaniacal possession--less frequently the subject of ironic treatment--then his standard is the simple satisfactions of domestic affection, the loving heart. He would brook no denial or masking of original sin on the one hand, and prescribed homely love as the cure of the root sin of pride

³⁴Ibid., I, 70.

and its inevitable loneliness on the other."³⁵

Homely love, the family, the hearth were all central to Hawthorne's philosophy of life, and to him the hearth became an embodiment of virtue and truth. In "Fire Worship" about "the holy hearth," he wrote: "If any earthly and material thing, or rather a divine idea embodied in brick and mortar, might be supposed to possess the permanence of moral truth, it was this."³⁶ With the emphasis upon love and the fond associations with the hearth in Hawthorne, one again is impressed by the moral basis in Hawthorne and the concept of morality as indicated by such concepts as "heart," "truth," and "love." In this regard, Grimshawe's instruction to Ned is relevant: "Then he told the boy that the condition of all good was, in the first place, truth; then courage; then justice; then mercy, out of which principles operating upon one another would come all brave, noble, high, unselfish actions, and the scorn of all mean ones; and how that from such a nature all hatred would fall away, and all good affections would be ennobled."³⁷

Hawthorne never seriously suggested an escape into the gloomy past. The Scarlet Letter implies affirmation. Hester refused to withdraw and to give up. In her circumstances, she lived an individual but a full life. The House of Seven Gables reaffirms the value and joy and vitality of the present life which one is to live with a due sense of the present.

³⁵ NEQ, XXX (Dec. 1957), p. 492.

³⁶ Works, IV, 203.

³⁷ Doctor Grimshawe's Secret, Works, XV, 48.

Mr. Ellenwood in "The Wedding Knell," before his marriage at the age of sixty-five, exemplified the futility of an "aimless and abortive life."³⁸ Gervayse Hastings' tragedy was that he could not really live because he had no feeling. Even Septimus Felton reached the conclusion that life was not to be alone with one's books in seclusion from men and nature: "Then he began to see that there must have been some principle of life left out of the books, so that these gathered thoughts lacked something that had given them their only value. Then he suspected that the way truly to live and answer the purposes of life was not to gather up thoughts into books, where they grew so dry, but to live and still be going about, full of green wisdom ripening ever, not in maxims cut and dry, but a wisdom ready for daily occasions, like a living fountain; and that to be this, it was necessary to exist long on earth, drink in all its lessons, and not to die on the attainment of some smattering of truth; but to live all the more for that, and apply it to mankind and increase it thereby."³⁹

As Hawthorne concluded "The Village Uncle," one might conclude the review of Hawthorne's moral philosophy of life: "Be this the moral, then. In chaste and warm affections, humble wishes, and honest toil for some useful end, there is health for the mind, and quiet for the heart, the prospect of a happy life, and the fairest hope of heaven."⁴⁰

³⁸Works, I, 27.

³⁹Septimus Felton, Works, XIV, 84.

⁴⁰Works, II, 120.

To complete this chapter on Hawthorne's beliefs, it is beneficial to review Hawthorne's attitude toward nature. Hawthorne was not a literary disciple of primitive nature as Cooper was in The Leatherstocking Tales. He made no attempt to ally himself with Emerson in the latter's actual but more abstract communion with nature nor with Thoreau, whose communion with nature was more concrete and practical. However, Hawthorne had an appreciation of concrete nature as well as that in the abstract. He did not have any particular systematic attitude toward nature. Nature was simply God's handiwork, and Hawthorne's interest in it was chiefly moral.

To Hawthorne, nature could be both objective and subjective, both amoral and moral. Primarily, nature was warm and sympathetic, a power of gentle influences and a source of purity.

As Hawthorne noted in his American Notebooks, nature at times could be objective: "Nothing comes amiss to Nature--all is fish that comes to her net. If there be a living form of perfect beauty instinct with soul--why, it is all very well and suits Nature well enough. But she would just as lief have that same beautiful, soul-illuminated body, to make worm's meat of, and to manure the earth with."⁴¹ But if occasionally aloof from the world of men, nature to Hawthorne never did remain objective for long. Hawthorne's dominant attitude was that nature was warm and sympathetic. In The Scarlet Letter, for example, the great

⁴¹P. 118.

black forest "became the playmate of the lonely" Pearl; "Sombre as it was, it put on the kindest of its moods to welcome her."⁴² And nature displayed its sympathy for Hester and Dimmesdale in their momentary bliss, for when Hester took off the scarlet letter and threw it into the woods the sunshine came out and the brook seemed to come to life.⁴³

Hawthorne's predominant concept of the benign influences of nature reflected itself in many ways, even in such instances as in "Rappaccini's Daughter" when Baglioni warned Giovanni of Rappaccini's cold, evil look."⁴⁴ In conclusion, the moral influence and function of nature is indicated in the following statement in which the town pump in effect speaks for the treasure it guards--nature itself: "Trust me, they may. In the moral welfare which you are to wage--and, indeed, in the whole conduct of your lives--you cannot choose a better example than myself, who have never permitted the dust and sultry atmosphere, the turbulence and manifold disquietudes of the world around me, to reach that deep, calm well of purity, which may be called my soul. And whenever I pour out that soul, it is to cool earth's fever or cleanse its stains."⁴⁵

⁴²Works, VI, 295.

⁴³Ibid., p. 294.

⁴⁴Ibid., IV, 148.

⁴⁵"A Rill From The Town Pump," Works, I, 196.

CHAPTER III

HAWTHORNE'S CONCEPT OF ART

Hawthorne's theory of art supposedly is identified with his practice, or one might say that presumably his practice demonstrates his theory and--as for any working artist--is the culmination of his theory. In Hawthorne, however, as suggested in the introduction, there are several discrepancies between theory and practice. What critics have said in explanation of Hawthorne's attempt and execution as an artist in some instances is different from what he himself said about what art should be and how it should be accomplished. Actually, Hawthorne did not have a literary theory in a systematic sense. As James remarked: "He was not a man with a literary theory; he was guiltless of a system. . . ." ¹

To begin more directly with the investigation of Hawthorne's theory of art, it is convenient first to consider Hawthorne's definition and concept of art. Generally speaking, one can say that for Hawthorne,

¹Hawthorne, p. 3. In "My Father's Literary Methods," Rose Hawthorne Lathrop wrote: "I am asked to write of my father's literary methods. I wish I knew just what they were--it would be easier then to write an article pleasing to the gentle reader--I might even hope to write a romance." Ladies Home Journal, XI (March 1894), 1.

to whom for all practical purposes ethics and aesthetics were inseparable, art was the expression of truth and beauty.

Hawthorne did not say much about the poet as versifier and about poetry as a genre. Caroline Ticknor maintains that although Hawthorne was the friend of many poets, he "could hardly be designated as the friend of poetry; he took especial pleasure in denouncing all manner of poetical productions, even though he thoroughly enjoyed the best poetry and was ever ready to do the poets themselves a good turn."² His comments about the quality and the appealing character of the different poets and their poetry varied. He "responded sympathetically to the adventurous freedom of Melville, the zest of Dickens, the beauty and pathos of Longfellow."³ He appreciated the "tender minuteness of touch" in the manner of Tennyson,⁴ and the "deep beauty and austere tenderness" of Emerson.⁵ In "Earth's Holocaust," he spoke of Milton's works as a "powerful blaze, gradually reddening into a coal, which promised to endure longer than almost any other material of the pile" and of Shakespeare's works as a "flame of such marvellous splendor that men shaded their eyes as against

²Hawthorne and His Publisher (Boston, 1913), p. 147.

³Randall Stewart, ed., "Hawthorne's Contributions to The Salem Advertiser," AL, V (Jan. 1934), 327.

⁴Our Old Home, Works, XI, 132.

⁵"The Old Manse," Works, IV, 42.

the sun's meridian glory."⁶

Offhand, it would seem that Clifford Pyncheon's taste for an enjoyment of poetry would be a limited one in respect to Hawthorne's own, but the similarities are striking: "He [Clifford] delighted in the swell and subsidence of the rhythm, and the happily recurring rhyme. Nor was Clifford incapable of feeling the sentiment of poetry,--not, perhaps, where it was highest or deepest, but where it was most flitting and ethereal."⁷ Clifford's feeling for poetry and the implied concept of it are not far removed from the concept of poetry indicated in the following letter from Hawthorne to Sophia (Dec. 5, 1839): "Dearest,--I wish I had the gift of making rhymes, for me/thinks there is poetry in my head and heart since I have been in love with you. You are a Poem. Of what sort, then? Epic? Mercy on me, no! A sonnet! No; for that is too labored and artificial. You are a sort of sweet, simple, gay, pathetic ballad, which Nature is singing, sometimes with tears, sometimes with smiles, and sometimes with intermingled smiles and tears."⁸ Yet despite the emphasis on feeling in the two quotations above, in contrast to his "blasted allegories"⁹ Hawthorne liked the "beef and ale" of Trollope.¹⁰ Such divergent expressions

⁶Works, V, 216.

⁷The House of Seven Gables, Works, VII, 211.

⁸Julian Hawthorne, Nathaniel Hawthorne and His Wife (Boston, 1885), I, 208.

⁹James T. Fields, a letter (April 13, 1854) from Hawthorne to Fields, in Yesterday With Authors (Boston, 1898), p. 75.

¹⁰A letter (Febr. 11, 1860) from Hawthorne to Fields, American Notebooks, p. xcii.

and tastes emphasize the fact that Hawthorne's theory and practice were at times different.

In general, Hawthorne's concept of art included (1) the combination of truth and beauty, and (2) the combination of the real (actual) and the ideal. Truth or the moral implication of truth was associated with the ideal.

As far as the writer of this study can determine, Hawthorne did not say in respect to either theory or practice that the artist should begin with a moral. However, according to Hawthorne's practice and on the basis of what he said about art, the artist, and the purpose of art, one can hardly avoid the conclusion that his statement in "Wakefield" (although here taken out of context) was a constituent part of his aesthetics: "Thought has always its efficacy, and every striking incident its moral."¹¹ On the other hand, Hawthorne recognized the aesthetic principle of the love of the beautiful. In the "Artist of the Beautiful," he revealed his understanding of and sympathy with Owen's obsession "to put the very spirit of beauty into form and give it motion."¹² Yet beauty, for Hawthorne, if not explicitly moral, was never immoral. Fundamentally, beauty pursued for its own sake eventually pointed up a truth. Charles H. Foster comments, ". . .not simply beauty, but a beauty that was truth was the goal of his art."¹³

¹¹Works, I, 173.

¹²Ibid., V, 296.

¹³"Hawthorne's Literary Theory," PMLA, LVII (March 1942), 247.

More specifically in respect to the place of a moral or a truth in Hawthorne's theory of art, Hawthorne made various statements which directly and indirectly suggest that meaning--moral or truth--was integral to his concept of art. In a letter to Fields (April 13, 1854), Hawthorne wrote disapprovingly of "those dreamy sketches" in the Mosses and stated that he was no longer certain that he comprehended his "own meaning," but he went on to say, "I remember that I always had a meaning, or at least thought I had."¹⁴ In the preface to The Marble Faun, Hawthorne commented: "The author proposed to himself merely to write a fanciful story, evolving a thoughtful moral. . . ."¹⁵ And in the preface to The House of the Seven Gables, making a distinction between the novel and the romance, Hawthorne indicated how essential truth was to art: "When a writer calls his work a Romance, it need hardly be observed that he wishes to claim a certain latitude, both as to its fashion and material, which he would not have felt himself entitled to assume had he professed to be writing a Novel. The latter form of composition is presumed to aim at a very minute fidelity, not merely to the possible, but to the probable and ordinary course of man's experience. The former--while, as a work of art, it must rigidly subject itself to laws, and while it sins unpardonably so far as it may swerve aside from the truth of the human heart--has fairly a right to present that truth

¹⁴Fields, p. 75.

¹⁵Works, IX, xxiii.

under circumstances, to a great extent, of the writer's own choosing or creation."¹⁶

Implicit in the following passage are several comments about the moral quality of first-rate art. After commenting quite favorably on Sodoma's fresco of Christ bound to a pillar, Hawthorne in The Marble Faun--on the basis of material taken from his notebooks--made the following statement about the therapeutic value of good art.

It is not of pictures like the above that galleries, in Rome or elsewhere, are made up, but of productions immeasurably below them, and requiring to be appreciated by a very different frame of mind. Few amateurs are endowed with a tender susceptibility to the sentiment of a picture; they are not won from an evil life, nor anywise morally improved by it. The love of art, therefore, differs widely in its influence from the love of nature; whereas, if art had not strayed away from its legitimate paths and aims, it ought to soften and sweeten the lives of its worshippers, in even a more exquisite degree than the contemplation of natural objects. But of its own potency, it has no such effect; and it fails likewise, in that other test of its moral value which poor Hilda was now involuntarily trying upon it. It cannot confront the heart in affliction; it grows dim when the shadow is upon us.¹⁷

Presumably, on the basis of the above passage, and the implication is in keeping with Hawthorne's beliefs and aesthetics in general, art according to its ideal concept--"its legitimate paths and aims"--should have a constructive moral influence. Art as an artificial product, man-made in contrast to the divinely created--such as external

¹⁶Ibid., VII, xxi-xxii.

¹⁷Ibid., X, 183-185.

nature--has no innate moral influence, but in so far as it resembles nature and cooperates with her, art reaches toward its legitimate character and purpose.

In this respect art serves as a handmaid to nature, to truth itself, be that truth in nature or in religion. About art's expressing religious truths, in regard to Sodoma's fresco of Christ Hawthorne wrote: "This hallowed work of genius shows what pictorial art, devoutly exercised, might effect in behalf of religious truth; involving as it does, deeper mysteries of revelation, and bringing them closer to man's heart, and making him tenderer to be impressed by them, than the most eloquent words of preacher or prophet."¹⁸

Even though emphasis on moral truth was an essential part of his theory of art, Hawthorne made a definite distinction between the aesthetic and the ethical. Although for Hawthorne the aesthetic alone had no lasting value, he could and did respond aesthetically to a strictly aesthetic stimulus.

In this regard to deviate briefly, one might return to the point that Hawthorne did not state that an artist should start with a moral. His practice suggests that he probably did start with a moral in most instances. The point here is not to object to that observation, but to clarify as possible distinction between theory and practice and also to suggest that according to his own statements Hawthorne conceivably could

¹⁸Ibid., p. 183.

have begun with an image, an aesthetic response to an object, as well as with an idea. One should recognize that such a procedure is legitimately admissible in Hawthorne's theory and that the procedure certainly should not be excluded from his practice.¹⁹

In The Marble Faun, for instance, Hawthorne was attracted to the "very lack of moral severity" in the faun although the moral ingredient was not to be excluded: "Perhaps it is the very lack of moral severity, of any high and heroic ingredient in the character of the Faun, that makes it so delightful an object to the human eye and to the frailty of the human heart. The being here represented is endowed with no principle of virtue, and would be incapable of comprehending such; but he would be

¹⁹Leon Howard in "Hawthorne's Fiction" (NCF, VII [March 1953], 237-250) goes too far in denying that Hawthorne began with a moral. Disagreeing with Fogle's statement that "the framework of Hawthorne's fiction is customarily a doctrine, a belief, or a moral proposition which he proceeds to test by using his imagination" (Fogle, p. 80), Howard says, "On the contrary, all we know concerning the inception of his stories points to the opposite conclusion. . ." (p. 241). Although Fogle's word "framework" may mean the originating point of Hawthorne's stories, it does not necessarily have to mean that. If "framework" is taken literally, then Fogle is not talking exactly about the inception of Hawthorne's stories but the kind of framework (literally speaking) within which Hawthorne's imagination works best. Howard's conclusion, although not wholly adequate because it minimizes too large a body of evidence that supports the view which Howard charges Fogle as having, does have a place, however, in Hawthorne's theory and should not be excluded from a consideration of his practice. Howard states that the stories "take their origin in some peculiar fancy which he develops by his rational understanding exercised by observation and reflection upon humanity and by the application of literary skill" (p. 241). The quarrel is not with Howard's description of the working of Hawthorne's mind as long as "rational understanding" includes the idea of the free play of the imagination. The question is whether Hawthorne in theory and practice began first with either a moral (truth) or an image (fancy). According to his theory, either procedure is permissible.

true and honest by dint of his simplicity."²⁰

That Hawthorne could respond aesthetically, that he could respond to a fancy,--although the moral was never far removed--is suggested in the following observation: ". . .an Apollo is beautiful; a group of fighting Amazon, and her enemies trampled under her horses's feet, is very impressive; a Faun copied from that of Praxiteles, and another who seems to be dancing, are exceedingly pleasant to look at. I like these strange, sweet, playful, rustic creatures, . . .Their character has never, that I know of been brought out in literature; and something very good, funny, and philosophical, as well as poetic, might very likely be educed from them. . . ." ²¹

Beauty itself for Hawthorne was an almost indefinable quality. It was elusive. Its absolute quality and character were associated with God, heaven, love, and the heart, and in a temporal sense with certain aspects of nature. Beauty abided and lurked in many places, and often one came upon it unexpectedly as it was shaped for the beholder by a particular perspective. Reflecting about St. Peter's in Rome, Hawthorne wrote: "Then I strolled round the great church, and find that it continues to grow upon me both in magnitude and beauty, by comparison with the many interiors of sacred edifices which I have lately seen. At

²⁰Works, IX, 8.

²¹"French and Italian Notebooks," II, 200-201.

times, a single casual, momentary glimpse of its magnificence gleams upon my soul, as it were, when I happen to glance at arch opening beyond arch, and I am surprised into admiration when I think least of it. I have experienced that a landscape, and the sky, unfold their deepest beauty in a similar way, not when they are gazed at of set purpose, but when the spectator looks suddenly through a peep-hole, among a crowd of other thoughts."²²

Actually Hawthorne's aesthetic sensitivity was not particularly unusual. At the same time, although Owen's limitations reflected his own, he understood Owen in "The Artist of the Beautiful," whose ideas were those "which grow up within the imagination and appear so lovely to it and of a value beyond whatever men call valuable."²³ At the end of the story, Hawthorne remarked: "When the artist rose high enough to achieve the beautiful, the symbol by which he made it perceptible to mortal senses became of little value in his eyes while his spirit possessed itself in the enjoyment of reality."²⁴

In regard to an awareness of beauty in a more decadent state, Hawthorne could even remind one of a mild-tempered Poe and some of the artists of the late nineteenth century aesthetic movement, although such reminders are in a distinct minority. In the following passage

²²Ibid., p. 114.

²³Works, V, 299.

²⁴Ibid., p. 330.

from The Marble Faun, Hawthorne remarked about the thrill received from the idea of beauty thrown away: "The final charm is bestowed by the malaria. There is a piercing, thrilling, delicious kind of regret in the idea of so much beauty thrown away, or only enjoyable at its half-development, in winter and early spring, and never to be dwelt amongst, as the home scenery of any human being."²⁵

The phrase "home scenery of any human being" reasserts Hawthorne's more basic concept of beauty. Profuse splendor did not move him. In "The Great Carbuncle," Hawthorne described a stone of such splendor that it was almost unreal. But as indicated by the tone, he was not very excited about it, for the quality of the stone's beauty was unworldly. Matthew and Hannah saw what the idea of that kind of beauty could do to men like the poet and the cynic. For themselves they realized that love and unselfishness were far more precious and that those virtues had a beauty of their own.

In "The Great Stone Face," Hawthorne associated the idea of beauty more specifically with virtue and a moral awareness. One could recognize external beauty easily, but its internal qualities one could perceive only intuitively in various ways by a moral glimpse, a sympathetic imagination, and by the love of beauty as a virtue in itself.

Along with his emphasis on beauty and truth, Hawthorne strove for a harmony of the real and the ideal, the actual and the imaginative.

²⁵Ibid., IX, 98.

The terms may have different meanings in Hawthorne. The "real" may mean absolute reality, which is comprised of truth and beauty, but it may also mean in opposition to the "ideal" the actual, the sensuously and morally factual conditions of life on earth. The "ideal" consisted of the absolute virtues of beauty, justice, truthfulness, integrity, love, mercy, etc. The "imaginative" in contrast to the "actual" and the "real" may be either the "ideal" or the fanciful.

In his writings, Hawthorne attempted to achieve a harmony of fiction and truth (cf. his distinction between the romance and the novel). By attempting to correlate and to strike a balance between the real and the ideal, the actual and the imaginative, he hoped to get at the truth of a matter, to know where the heart stood. In this respect he strove for the perception of a reality beyond that of the actual. His sense of the higher reality was not particularly metaphysical, but it was certainly moral and universal. For this reason, T. S. Eliot spoke of Hawthorne's writings, despite their shadowy, allegorical character, as "truly a criticism," for indirectly Hawthorne dealt with the present more critically than did some of the transcendentalists who were considered to be the spokesman and proper critics of their age.²⁶

Although Hawthorne was concerned about the actualities of life--implicit in his stories--he was sensitive to, and toward his public

²⁶Eliot as quoted by F. O. Matthiessen in American Renaissance (New York, 1941), p. 193. See also Eliot's comment in "The Hawthorne Aspect," part II of "Henry James," The Shock of Recognition, ed. Edmund Wilson (Garden City, 1943), p. 863.

apologetic for his, shadowy sketches and tales. He referred to the Mosses as "idle weeds and withering blossoms," "old faded things," and "fitful sketches, with so little of external life about them. . . ." ²⁷ In the preface to The Twice-Told Tales he wrote: "They have the pale tint of flowers that blossomed in too retired a shade,--coolness of a meditative habit, which diffuses itself through the feeling and observation of every sketch." ²⁸ But on the other hand, he would not renounce them, for he found the "shadowy foliage" of The Twice-Told Tales also to be a "pleasant pathway among realities" and a means for "the formation of imperishable friendships." ²⁹ Speaking more boldly in the opening paragraphs of "Rappaccini's Daughter" about M. de l' Aubepine, Hawthorne spoke of the slight "counterfeit of real life" and the allegory which might detract, but he also suggested that more truth may underlie and be implicit than one initially might suspect.

His writings, to do them justice, are not altogether destitute of fancy and originality; they might have won him greater reputation but for an inveterate love of allegory, which is apt to invest his plots and characters with the aspect of scenery and people in the clouds, and to steal away the human warmth out of his conceptions. His fictions are sometimes historical, sometimes of the present day, and sometimes so far as can be discovered, have little or no reference either to time or space. In any case, he generally contents himself with a very slight embroidery of outward manners,--the faintest possible counterfeit of real life,--and endeavors to create an interest by some less obvious peculiarity of the subject. ³⁰

²⁷"Old Manse," Works, IV, 46.

²⁸Works, I, liv.

²⁹Ibid., p. lvii.

³⁰Ibid., IV, 125-126.

Apart from his own love of realistic detail, his sensitivity about his shadowy foliage can be accounted for by his fear that the public would be turned away by the externals and not discover that his stories were more than what they appeared to be on the surface, that they did deal with life in its realistic and factual character. In "Fancy's Show Box," commenting about the "train of incidents in a projected tale," he indicated the importance that in a story he gave to the realities of actual life: "The latter [the tale], in order to produce a sense of reality in the reader's mind, must be conceived with such proportionate strength by the author as to seem, in the glow of fancy, more like truth, past, present, or to come, than purely fiction."³¹ The emphasis on the "sense of reality" suggests something more than the author's having created an artistically successful illusion, something beyond the simply non-fictional.

Hawthorne believed that thought was necessary to give a sense of universal fact and also to make individual facts come alive. In the following quotation, which is taken from a larger context about making Samuel Johnson come to life in a literary way, Hawthorne spoke about the aid of thought in overcoming the difficulty of making facts come to life realistically to enable one to appraise them better:

³¹Ibid., I, 305.

A sensible man had better not let himself be betrayed into these attempts to realize the things, which he has dreamed about, and which, when they cease to be purely the ideal in his mind, will have lost the truest of their truth, the loftest (sic) and profoundest part of their power over his sympathies. Facts, as we really find them, whatever poetry they may involve, are covered with a stony excrescence of prose resembling the crust on a beautiful seashell, and they never show their most delicate and divinest colors until we shall have dissolved away their grosser actualities by steeping them long in a powerful menstruum of thought. And seeking to actualize them again, we do but renew the crust. If this were otherwise,--if the moral sublimity of a great fact depended in any degree on its garb of external circumstances, things which change and decay,--it could not itself be immortal and ubiquitous, and only a brief point of time and a little neighborhood would be spiritually nourished by its grandeur and beauty.³²

Later commenting about the young boy in Uttuxeter who did not know about Samuel Johnson's doing penance by standing in the square for having once disobeyed his father, Hawthorne expressed the importance of aesthetic distance to give a sense of reality to facts: "It but confirms what I have been saying, that sublime and beautiful facts are best understood when etherealized by distance."³³ (It must be kept in mind that the sublime and beautiful facts in this context are more moral than aesthetic in inception and content.)

Hawthorne's statement about distance is associated in his theory of art with his concept of the past and its function in his works. History and legend served as an objective correlative for Hawthorne to analyze and investigate artistically the contemporary as well as the timeless realities of life. With reference more to his practice than to his

³²Our Old Home, Works, XI, 196.

³³Ibid., p. 200.

theory, history and legend functioned as a myth whereby he could evaluate and express his intuitive perceptions and other experiences of actual life. Using the historical and legendary past as an expressive form, Hawthorne could analyze principles and test conclusions for their moral relevance. The past then was a means to deal with the present with moral and artistic validity.

Two other points remain to be said about Hawthorne's attitude toward the past. On the one hand, the fact that he used the past to achieve aesthetic distance should not detract from his genuine interest in the past as his cultural heritage and the drama of his forbears. On the other hand, as interesting as Hawthorne found the past, aside from his artistic use of it, he did not cherish the past particularly for its own sake. Commenting about the American's enthusiasm about old things in contrast to the apparent nonchalance of the English toward antiquated things, Hawthorne concluded: "An old thing is no better than a new thing, unless it (be) a symbol of something, or have some value in itself."³⁴

But generally speaking, the past was for him a means of probing for universals, for a higher realism. Hawthorne temperamentally and creatively responded to the past as a myth which he could use to consider the nature of truth, and less often beauty except as allied with truth. Consequently, although Hawthorne expressed his concern about the public's attitude toward his pale flowers and shadowy sketches, he was aware of

³⁴English Notebooks, p. 127.

a deeper reality underlying the vague and romantic trappings in his stories. He had a sense of fact that rose above space and time.

Oddly perhaps, the linking of the real and the ideal, the actual and the imaginative, became illustrated in one way for Hawthorne by the faun. There is no question about the fact that the faun captured Hawthorne's fancy. However, it also suggested to him a sylvan innocence, an ideal of human brotherhood, and a unity with nature. About the Faun of Praxiteles, Hawthorne wrote in The Marble Faun:

But, if the spectator broods long over the statue, he will be conscious of its spell; all the pleasantness of sylvan life, all the genial and happy characteristics of creatures that dwell in woods and fields, will seem to be mingled and kneaded into one substance, along with the kindred qualities in the human soul. Trees, grass, flowers, woodland, streamlets, cattle, deer, and unsophisticated man. The essence of all these was compressed long ago, and still exists, within that discolored marble surface of the Faun of Praxiteles.

And, after all, the idea may have been no dream, but rather a poet's reminiscence of a period when man's affinity with nature was more strict, and his fellowship with every living thing more intimate and dear.³⁵

On the basis of moral truth and the balance of the real and the ideal, Hawthorne attempted "to open an intercourse with the world." Artistically he most often proceeded by an indirect route through shadowy times and places, but he attempted to deal with the realities of life in a basic way. He looked for a higher moral reality, and in that respect he could write rather confidently in the preface to The Twice-Told Tales: "Every sentence, so far as it embodies thought or sensibility

³⁵Works, IX, 10.

may be understood and felt by anybody who will give himself the trouble to read it, and will take up the book in a proper mood."³⁶ (Hawthorne's primary point in the context was that the style was that of a man of society. There was no "abstruseness of idea, or obscurity of expression, which mark the written communications of a solitary mind with itself.")

Another fundamental point in Hawthorne's theory of art is his emphasis upon the "inner soul of a work of art."³⁷ One of Hawthorne's complaints about English painters was that "they cannot paint anything high, heroic, and ideal. . . .They are strong in homeliness and ugliness; weak in their efforts at the beautiful." Hawthorne said that to him it was unaccountable that the achievements of the painters "should be so much inferior to those of the English poets, who have really elevated the human mind" (except that "painting has only become an English art subsequently to the epochs of the greatest poets, and since the beginning of the last century [eighteenth] during which England had no poets").³⁸

It is too bad that so many of Hawthorne's critics have over-emphasized Hawthorne's moral disapproval of nude statues, for some of the more pointed and clear statements that Hawthorne made about art and the artist were made about sculpture and the sculptor. About a statue of Michelangelo,

³⁶Ibid., I, lv.

³⁷"French and Italian Notebooks," II, 191.

³⁸English Notebooks, pp. 549-550.

Hawthorne wrote: "It comes to life, and you see that the princely figure is brooding over some great design, which, when he has arranged in his own mind, the world will be fain to execute for him. No such majesty and grandeur has elsewhere been put into human shape. It is all a miracle; the deep repose, and the deep life within it; it is as much a miracle to have achieved this as to make a statue that would rise up and walk. . . .How wonderful! To take a block of marble and convert it wholly into thoughts."³⁹

In the following quotation from The Marble Faun, in addition to the statements about the sensitivity and the responsibility of the artist and the implications about the content of serious art, Hawthorne made suggestions as to the fundamentality of the ethereal quality of art and the harmony of the true and the beautiful:

A sculptor, indeed, to meet the demands which our preconceptions make upon him, should be even more indispensably a poet than those who deal in measured verse and rhyme. His material, or instrument, which serves him in the stead of shifting and transitory language, is a pure, white, undecaying substance. It insures immortality to whatever is wrought in it, and therefore makes it a religious obligation to commit no idea to its mighty guardianship, save such as may repay the marble for its faithful care, its incorruptible fidelity, by warming it with an ethereal life. Under this aspect, marble assumes a sacred character; and no man should dare to touch it unless he feels within himself a certain consecration and a priesthood, the only evidence of which, for the public eye, will be the high treatment of heroic subjects, of the delicate evolution of spiritual, through material beauty.⁴⁰

³⁹"French and Italian Notebooks," II, 401-402.

⁴⁰Works, IX, 187-188.

Although Hawthorne had a high regard for art and recognized its selective and intensifying process--demonstrated to him by several English landscape paintings which were "full of imaginative beauty and of the better truth etherealized out of prosaic truth of Nature,"--⁴¹ he consistently ascribed to nature a position superior to art. Hawthorne thought that nature could teach an artist more than art itself could. The painter in "The Prophetic Picture," born and educated in Europe, had "studied the grandeur or beauty of conception, and every touch of the master hand" in all the galleries and walls of churches "till there was nothing more for his powerful mind to learn. Art could add nothing to its lessons, but Nature might. He had therefore visited a world whither none of his professional brethren had preceded him, to feast his eyes on visible images that were noble and picturesque, yet had never been transferred to canvas."⁴² And according to "The New Adam and Eve," nature had a "wisdom and simplicity" which art did not have.⁴³

Hawthorne's comments in the English Notebooks about the garden at Blenheim emphasized his concept of the ideal relationship between nature and art. In that harmonious working together of nature and art, art in a sense completed the creation of nature, and the two together--

⁴¹English Notebooks, p. 614.

⁴²Works, I, 225-226.

⁴³Ibid., V, 2.

the natural and the artificial--created an ideal beauty: "The world is not the same within the garden fence, that it is without; it is a finer, lovelier, more harmonious Nature; and the great Mother seems to lend herself kindly to the gardener's will, knowing that he will give her ideal beauty, and allow her to take all the credit and praise to herself."⁴⁴ Clearly, art was not to claim superiority over nature.

Although Hawthorne was definitely a product of his traditional heritage, it is hazardous to attempt to fit him into any precise literary or artistic movement and into any preconceived theory of art. In some instances, he evidently followed where he was led. For example, Miss Magginis maintains that Hawthorne "saw what Murray told him and every other traveller to see, and often followed the current popular opinions about what he saw, particularly if he was rather indifferent to the object in question." But she also states that when Hawthorne "felt very strongly about a building, a picture, or a statue, he expressed his own reactions and feelings, whether they agreed with the popular verdict or not."⁴⁵

This independence of mind, characteristic more of his temperament

⁴⁴P. 409.

⁴⁵"Hawthorne's Comments on the Arts. . .," pp. 399-400. In her study Miss Magginis refers to John Murray's editions of Handbook for Travellers in Central Italy (London, 1853), Handbook of Rome and Its Environs (London, 1853), and Handbook for Travellers in Northern Italy (London, 1854).

perhaps than of his intellect alone, emphasizes Hawthorne's elusiveness in the attempt to categorize him in respect to a literary movement. As one at present looks back on Hawthorne, he is seen as a transitional writer between early nineteenth-century romanticism and twentieth-century realism as developed by the present mid-century symbolists rather than the turn of the century naturalists.

Although Hawthorne was not distinctly original, it is not easy to trace external influences on him. At most one finds parallels and similarities, but few direct influences.⁴⁶ Hawthorne read widely, but one can develop no specific theory of direct influence on Hawthorne on the basis of the kind of books that he read nor on the number of any particular kind of books. In his article, "Hawthorne's Literary Borrowings," Arlin Turner wrote: "Hawthorne's literary indebtednesses are, however, as well as I can make out, chiefly to English writers. It was to Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Bunyan, Scott, and the Gothic romancers that he owed most of all, though he took definite hints from certain

⁴⁶ An example of some of the investigations of possible influences on Hawthorne is Henry W. Delaune's suggestive but inconclusive study of the influence on Hawthorne of Edmund Burke's A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful; see Delaune's article "The Beautiful of 'The Artist of the Beautiful,'" Xavier University Studies, I (December 1961), 94-99.

lesser writers."⁴⁷ Hawthorne's reading, as Randall Stewart points out, was "completely assimilated. He was one of the least allusive of modern writers; and in both the conception and the execution of his fiction, he maintained a sturdy independence."⁴⁸ Julian remarked: "All great writers, I suppose, read other writers' books; and Hawthorne, in his time, read many. But if we search his tales and romances for traces of his reading, we are apt to come away empty. There is matter enough there, of course; but little of it resembles what had been produced by other minds. The literary seeds that had been planted in the fertile soil of his memory, disintegrated by his independent thought and warmed by his imagination, had been transformed into something new and unfamiliar. They had acquired a fresh mysterious life of their own, and they aspired upward."⁴⁹

In regard to various literary influences on Hawthorne, Jane Lundblad has analyzed Hawthorne's use of the gothic tradition,⁵⁰ but other than the documentation of the corresponding characteristics there is really not much else to say about it. In her study of Hawthorne's view of the artist, Millicent Bell says that Hawthorne "never--except in his

⁴⁷PMLA, LI (June 1936), 543-562. See also "Books Read by Hawthorne 1828-50, From the 'Charge Books' of the Salem Athenaeum," EIHC, LXVIII (January 1932), 65-87; Marion Louise Kesselring, Hawthorne's Reading, 1828-1850 (New York, 1959); and Austin Warren, "Hawthorne's Reading," NEQ, VIII (December 1935), 480-497.

⁴⁸"Hawthorne and The Faerie Queene," PQ, XII (April 1933), 197.

⁴⁹Hawthorne Reading (Cleveland, 1902), p. 2.

⁵⁰Hawthorne and the Tradition of Gothic Romance (Cambridge, Mass., 1946).

weakest moments--uses the Gothic material for its own sake."⁵¹ The gothic was a characteristic of Hawthorne's writings, but it accounts for only a part of his scope and success. About the influence of Tieck and other Germans, Henry A. Pochmann writes: "By and large, however, the influence of German literature on Hawthorne is relatively inconsequential. Most of Hawthorne's tales which suggest outside influences are traceable less to German sources than to his peculiar temperamental inheritance."⁵²

Another question that has been raised is Hawthorne's relationship to the English romantics by way of Coleridge and the latter's concept of organic unity. In general, Hawthorne was allied with the English romantic movement as well as the American. He reflected a good deal of Coleridge's influence on the writers of the time. Richard Fogle, for instance, points out that "Hawthorne's treatment of the prose Romance is organic as Coleridge's account of Romantic drama and poetry is organic, that is, it subordinates surface realism to spiritual truth and insight which unifies by infusing and shaping its materials."⁵³ From the

⁵¹Hawthorne's View of the Artist (New York, 1962), p. 69.

⁵²German Culture in America (Madison, 1957), p. 388.

⁵³"Organic Form in American Criticism: 1840-1870," Development of American Literary Criticism, ed. Floyd Stovall (Chapel Hill, 1955), pp. 101-102. At the risk of overstatement at times, Fogle and Roy Male develop at length the influence of the English romantics on Hawthorne. See Fogle's Hawthorne's Fiction, pp. 76ff., and Roy Male's "'From the Innermost Germ': The Organic Principle in Hawthorne's Fiction," ELH, XX (Sept. 1953), 218-236; "Hawthorne and the Concept of Sympathy," PMLA, LXVIII (March 1953), 138-149; Hawthorne's Tragic Vision (Austin, 1957), pp. 20ff.

preceding analysis, in this chapter, of Hawthorne's concept of art, it is evident that internal unity or organic unity is a fundamental characteristic of his art and method. But Hawthorne did not have a metaphysical view of nature whereby he saw his works of art as an organic development of nature itself and as analogous to nature. As stated before (Chapter I), the influence of Plato on Hawthorne was the general influence of Plato on the culture of which Hawthorne was a part. How aware Hawthorne was of the influence of Coleridge and English romanticism and to what degree the influence of the English romantics can be demonstrated in Hawthorne are debatable.

In his study "Hawthorne on the Imagination," Richard Coanda compared Hawthorne's ideas and methods with Coleridge's. Unquestionably, Hawthorne shows the influence of Coleridge. However, as Coanda implies, it is one thing to point out Hawthorne's affinity with the English romantics, and it is quite another to suggest that he consciously carried out their principles. For example, about Hawthorne's images, Coanda writes: "Broadly traditional, Hawthorne's images develop according to whim, yet are compatible with and frequently enlighten romantic theory."⁵⁴ About the indirect influence of Coleridge on Hawthorne, Coanda writes: "I hope that in the light of the findings I will not appear outré in

⁵⁴Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation (University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1960), p. 30. As an illustration of imagery in Hawthorne that is compatible with romantic theory, see Hawthorne's remarks in "The Custom House" (Works, VI, 49-51) about the effect of moonlight on the imagination.

suggesting that the democratic Hawthorne may have absorbed aesthetic attitudes from the prolixity of a monarchist. Even if Hawthorne had not read Coleridge, or lived in a nest of cultists, he knew other romantics and Victorians who continued the Coleridge influence."⁵⁵ But about the direct influence, Coanda states: "Though Hawthorne read Coleridge, I do not insist on direct influence."⁵⁶

The difficulty of defining the exact influence of the English romantics on Hawthorne emphasizes his affinity in general with his cultural environment. He wrote and thought within the tradition of New England Puritanism. At the same time, perhaps more than he was aware, he reflected the transcendental thought of his age. In Hawthorne's View of the Artist, Millicent Bell writes: "The contemporary matrix was transcendental. . . there is no denying that he absorbed the elements of transcendentalism in common with his contemporaries and could no more have avoided the transcendental framework of ideas than he could have avoided acquiring the touches of taste or accent that identified him as a New Englander of the nineteenth century."⁵⁷

Hawthorne, of course, was acquainted with many of the transcendentalists. While living at the Old Manse, he and his wife associated with

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 30.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 25. In footnote sixty-two on page 118 of his dissertation, Coanda writes: "Hawthorne was no one's disciple but responded to the entire complex of available ideas. I stress Coleridge as a spokesman, but do not insist that Hawthorne knew his ideas were traceable to him."

⁵⁷p. 12.

them, and he read their works. He read the Dial, although with dissatisfaction.⁵⁸ He participated for a time in the Brook Farm experiment. About his experience there, he wrote:

The better life! Possibly, it would hardly look so now; it is enough if it looked so then. The greatest obstacle to being heroic is the doubt whether one may not be going to prove one's self a fool; the truest heroism is to resist the doubt; and the profoundest wisdom to know when it ought to be resisted, and when to be obeyed.

Yet, after all, let us acknowledge it wiser, if not more sagacious, to follow out one's daydream to its natural consummation, although, if the vision have been worth the having, it is certain never to be consummated otherwise than by a failure. And what of that? Its airiest fragments, impalpable as they may be, will possess a value that lurks not in the most ponderous realities of any practicable scheme. They are not the rubbish of the mind. Whatever else I may repent of, therefore, let it be reckoned neither among my sins for follies that I once had faith and force enough to form generous hopes of the world's destiny--yes!--and to do what in me lay for their accomplishment. . ."⁵⁹

It is a question as to how much Hawthorne was actually influenced by transcendentalism. Transcendentalism itself he rejected. His criticism of reformers was a criticism for the most part of transcendentalists or people, like Hollingsworth in The Blithedale Romance, who worked within the movement. His most harsh criticism of transcendentalism is in "The Celestial Railroad," where he described "Giant Transcendentalist," who "makes it his business to seize upon honest travellers and fatten them for his table with plentiful meals of smoke, mist, moonshine, raw potatoes, and sawdust." Hawthorne further wrote: ". . .as to his form, his

⁵⁸American Notebooks, p. 176.

⁵⁹The Blithedale Romance, Works, VIII, 9-10.

features, his substance, and his nature generally, it is the chief peculiarity of this huge miscreant that neither he for himself, nor anybody for him, has ever been able to describe them. As we rushed by the cavern's mouth we caught a hasty glimpse of him, looking somewhat like an ill-proportioned figure, but considerably more like a heap of fog and duskiness. He shouted after us, but in so strange a phraseology that we knew not what he meant, nor whether to be encouraged or affrighted."⁶⁰

However, Hawthorne held certain views and attitudes which, on the surface at least, he held in common with the transcendentalists. For instance, without sacrificing his non-transcendental view of evil, Hawthorne reflected the Platonic and characteristically transcendental belief in the ultimate identity and unity of beauty, truth, and goodness. He relied heavily on the intuition as a means of apprehending truth. Despite his emphasis on sin and its consequences of guilt and suffering, he was in many ways an idealist. And although Hawthorne thought of nature fundamentally as a material reality, he was interested chiefly in its moral influence. But, what Hawthorne held in common with the transcendentalists were those thoughts and forms that were characteristic of the age in general.

In conclusion, Hawthorne's relationship to the English romantics and to the New England transcendentalists was influential and enriching. However, he was basically independent and eclectic. He was

⁶⁰Works, IV, 274-275.

assimilative, without being systematic. Although, at first, he gives the impression of being aloof from his age, he was an integral part of his cultural milieu and its development. Yet, it is misleading to place Hawthorne in any category of direct influence and to impose upon him any particular movement of thought. Even though Hawthorne was not especially original, his theory of art, finally, was very much his own.

CHAPTER IV

THE ARTIST

Hawthorne's remarks about the artist in some respects point out more clearly and concretely what he held art to be than do some of his statements about art itself. The concept of the artist is less abstract than that of art, and Hawthorne's comments about the artist, furthermore, are more abundant. Hawthorne's references to the artist and his assertions about the artist's chief qualities fall into five general areas: (1) the artist's warmth of heart, (2) his faculty of the imagination, (3) his genius, (4) his indispensable sense of craftsmanship, and (5) his relationship to others. Hawthorne does not formally list these points nor rank them, but the order here given reflects in a general way the emphasis that he gives to them.

Crucial to Hawthorne's moral philosophy as well as to his theory of art was his emphasis on a warm and passionate heart and on sympathetic love and understanding. Hawthorne expected the artist to be warm and constructive. In fulfilling the function of art, that is, to present truth and beauty, the artist was to portray the ideal character of nature and life. In this regard, Hawthorne's comments about the cooperation of art and nature suggest a parallel between that cooperation and the

relationship between art and life. Art enabled one to develop life more fully. Art helped to idealize--spiritualize--life. But a work of art did not have any moral quality of its own. It had only that which the artist gave it. Accordingly, the passionate intensity of the artist's feelings and understanding, the moral quality of his insight into life, contributed directly to the development of good art.

Neither the intellect nor craftsmanship alone could enable an artist to imbue a work with this life-giving quality, however. Many of the late Renaissance Italian artists, for instance, whose works Hawthorne disliked, were in an external sense master craftsmen. But as far as Hawthorne was concerned, their kind of success came from the intellect, not from the heart: "They substituted a keen intellectual perception and a marvellous knack of external arrangements, instead of the live sympathy and sentiment which should have been their inspiration." To Hawthorne, "after the art [Italian] had become consummate," Italian pictures betrayed a "deficiency of earnestness and absolute truth."¹ By contrast, the Dutch and Flemish painters were men with "warm fists" and "human hearts." Writing about his visit to the Palazzo Borghese in Rome, Hawthorne concluded: "I was glad, in the very last of the twelve rooms, to come upon some Dutch and Flemish pictures, very few, but very welcome; Rubens, Rembrandt, Vandyke, Paul Potter, Teniers, and others--men of flesh and blood, with warm fists, and human hearts. As compared with

¹The Marble Faun, Works, X, 181.

them, these mighty Italian masters seem men of polished steel, not human, nor addressing themselves so much to human sympathies as to a formed intellectual taste."²

Hawthorne did not dismiss the place of the intellect in works of art, nor the importance of the intellect to the artist, but he insisted that the life of a work of art come basically from the heart. For example, according to "P,'s Correspondence," Shelley's later works "are warmer with human love" than his earlier ones: "The author learned to dip his pen oftener into his own heart, and has thereby avoided the faults into which a too exclusive use of fancy and intellect are wont to betray him. Formerly his page was often little other than a concrete arrangement of crystallizations, or even of icicles, as cold as they were brilliant."³

One reason that Hawthorne distrusted scientists is that they were inclined to develop the intellect at the expense of the heart, e. g., Aylmer in "The Birthmark," and Rappaccini. Furthermore, Doctor Cacaphodel, in "The Great Carbuncle," lacked artistic imagination, and was altogether void of aesthetic sensitivity: "Doctor Cacaphodel, the alchemist, returned to his laboratory with a prodigious fragment of granite, which he ground to powder, dissolved in acids, melted in the crucible, and burned with the blow-pipe, and published the result of his experiments in one of the heaviest folios of the day. And, for all these purposes, the gem itself

²"French and Italian Notebooks," II, 142.

³Works, V, 183.

could not have answered better than the granite."⁴

Hilda's sympathetic copying marks the extreme in Hawthorne, on the other hand, of his insistence on the artist's warmth and sympathy of the heart. The point of Hilda's sympathetic copying, for our purposes here, is that she had the ability to discover the heart of the painting itself. Hilda was not one of those mere copyists who worked "entirely from the outside" and were certain "to leave out that indefinable nothing, that inestimable something, that constitutes the life and soul through which the picture gets its immortality."⁵ Hilda copied or worked internally. Her approach to a painting was "to select some high, noble, and delicate portion of it, in which the spirit and essence of the picture culminated."⁶ (Her inability to do so later did not seem to impair Hawthorne's theory. He did not indicate that Hilda's experience in any way nullified what he had said about the positive kind of copying. Hilda was no longer able sympathetically to reach into the aesthetic center of the picture because she had lost her "innocence." Interesting as a side-note and indicative of Hawthorne's habit of stopping short in his thinking is the fact that innocent Hilda, while unmerciful to sinners, could penetrate the essence of a painting--its heart, its emotional center,--but could not when she learned how to be merciful, to have heart.)

⁴Ibid., I, 220.

⁵The Marble Faun, Works, IX, 79.

⁶Ibid., p. 77.

Even Miriam's "warmth and passionateness," which she had the faculty of putting into her productions, overcame the technical deficiency in her paintings.⁷ In "Drowne's Wooden Image," Drowne accomplished his masterpiece after he was made a genius for the occasion by the "excitement, kindled by love." After this love and excitement of heart forsook him, he became "again the mechanical carver in wood, without the power even of appreciating the work that his own hands had wrought."⁸ Southey as a poet lacked the quality of the heart that presumably would have enabled Hawthorne to appreciate his writings more. Hawthorne wrote: "As for Southey himself, my idea is, that few better or more blameless men have ever lived, than he; but he seems to lack color, passion, warmth, or something that should enable me to bring him into closer relation with myself."⁹ Hawthorne himself had occasions when his method and accomplishments were far from being in accord with Zenobia's advice to Coverdale about writing a ballad: ". . .put your soul's ache into it, and turn your sympathy to good account, as other poets do, and as poets must, unless they choose to give us glittering icicles instead of lines of fire."¹⁰ For in a letter to Sophia (Sept. 10, 1841), Hawthorne wrote that he would give "Mrs. Bullfrog" up to Sophia's "severest reprehension"; as he explained: ". . .it did not come from any depth within me--neither my heart

⁷Ibid., p. 23.

⁸Works, V, 108.

⁹English Notebooks, p. 179.

¹⁰The Blithedale Romance, Works, VIII, 319.

nor mind had anything to do with it."¹¹

Hawthorne also maintained that the artist had to be honest. He criticized portrait painting because he believed that portraits seldom represented the sitters. When a portrait painter like Vandyke "achieved graces that rise above time and fashion," Hawthorne questioned whether the works were genuine history.¹² On the other hand, honesty to himself and to his subject repaid the artist by his accomplishing a true and greater art. About Kenyon's Cleopatra, Hawthorne remarked: "The face was a miraculous success. The sculptor had not shunned to give the full Nubian lips, and other characteristics of the Egyptian physiognomy. His courage and integrity had been abundantly rewarded; for Cleopatra's beauty shone out richer, warmer, more triumphantly beyond comparison, than if, shrinking timidly from the truth, he had chosen the tame Grecian type."¹³

In addition to the warmth and integrity of the heart, essential to the artist was the "imaginative faculty." In "The Custom House," Hawthorne spoke of it as being stimulated by moonlight in a familiar room and by a "dim coal fire." Stimulated, the imaginative faculty enabled the floor of the familiar room to "become a neutral territory, somewhere between the real world and fairyland, where the Actual and the Imaginary

¹¹Love Letters of Nathaniel Hawthorne, 1839-41 and 1841-63. (Chicago, 1907), II, 4.

¹²English Notebooks, p. 552.

¹³The Marble Faun, Works, IX, 173.

may meet."¹⁴ The imagination enabled the artist to grasp the essence of either an image or an idea and to imbue it with substance and life. Including the fancy but more than just that, the imagination was the assimilating faculty of the heart and mind which could either create or recreate, whichever the case might be. Thus, for example, Byron's "celebrated description" of the Coliseum was "better than the reality," for he "beheld the scene in his mind's eye."¹⁵

In connection with the imaginative faculty, Hawthorne emphasized the importance of thought. To be done well, a work of art in addition to good craftsmanship depended upon thought: brooding, meditative thought, and reflection. For instance, about the scenery that he saw on his way to Southampton, Hawthorne wrote: "English scenery to be appreciated, and to be re-produced with pen or pencil requires to be dwelt upon long, and to be wrought out with the nicest touches. A coarse and hasty brush is not the instrument for such work."¹⁶ Indeed, in that statement, there is the definite suggestion that hasty and coarse workmanship results from inadequate thought.

The intuition, of course, became involved with this brooding thought and the working of the imagination. Originality to Hawthorne come from such "an innate perception and reflection of truth."¹⁷ As

¹⁴Works, VI, 49-50.

¹⁵The Marble Faun Works, IX, 212.

¹⁶English Notebooks, p. 370.

¹⁷American Notebooks, p. 168.

Foster points out,¹⁸ "the rudiments of a poetic and imaginative mind" were for the artist, as Hawthorne wrote, "a brooding habit taking outward things into itself and imbuing them with its essence until, after they had lain there awhile, they assumed a relation both to truth and to himself, and became mediums to affect other minds with the magnetism of his own."¹⁹

The imaginative faculty, which is comprised of an intuitive perception of things, brooding thought and a reflecting mind, and the image-making faculty itself, may be associated with what Hawthorne in The House of the Seven Gables referred to as poetic insight: the gift of discerning. Commenting on Hepzibah's opening the shop, after remarking that "life is made up of marble and mud," Hawthorne wrote: "What is called poetic insight is the gift of discerning, in this sphere of strangely mingled elements, the beauty and the majesty which are compelled to assume a garb so sordid."²⁰ This gift of discernment suggests one of the responsibilities of the artist in a world often sordid, which was to point out its beauty and majesty in order to ennoble and elevate life.

Hawthorne also recognized what traditionally has been held to be characteristic if not distinct faculties of artists. Among them are the

¹⁸"Hawthorne's Literary Theory," p. 250.

¹⁹Dr. Grimshawe's Secret, Works, XV, 123-124.

²⁰Works, VII, 56.

sensitivity to "a restless melancholy" which Hawthorne attributed to Kenyon as the latter left Monte Beni.²¹ Another is the artist's enchantment with ruins. Hawthorne wrote that "there is reason to suspect that a people are waning to decay and ruin the moment that their life becomes fascinating either in the poet's imagination or the painter's eye."²² He himself was frequently fascinated by ruin, particularly by English ruins as his English Notebook frequently attests.

Hawthorne believed that good artists were rare just as geniuses were rare. He maintained that genius was essential for the best art, but he assumed that the quality of genius was one that all people potentially possessed. In "The Procession of Life," he expressed dissatisfaction with the idea of ascribing genius to "a separate class of mankind on the basis of high intellectual power." Instead he was inclined to think that genius was "a higher development of innate gifts common to all." He proceeded to state: "Perhaps, moreover, he whose genius appears deepest and truest excels his fellows in nothing save the knack of expression-- he throws out occasionally a lucky hint at truths of which every human soul is profoundly, though unutterably, conscious."²³

Since Hawthorne declined to ascribe any specifically different intellectual quality to a genius, one might assume on the basis of his

²¹The Marble Faun, Works, X, 110.

²²Ibid., X, 121.

²³Works, IV, 295-296.

emphasis on the sympathetic warmth and understanding of the heart that warmth and love contributed to the development of the genius-faculty and a demonstration of its powers. According to "Drowne's Wooden Image" and the many comments about art in The Marble Faun, the assumption would be correct. About Drowne's uninspired figureheads for boats, Hawthorne remarked: "But at least there was no inconsiderable skill of hand, nor a deficiency of any attribute to render them really works of art, except that deep quality, be it of soul or intellect, which bestows life upon the lifeless and warmth upon the cold, and which, had it been present, would have made Drowne's wooden image instinct with spirit."²⁴

The painter Copley, visiting Drowne, observed that one could bestow on the image "the questionable praise that it looked as if a living man had here been changed to wood, and that not only the physical, but the intellectual and spiritual part, partook of the stolid transformation. But in not a single instance did it seem as if the wood were imbibing the ethereal essence of humanity."²⁵ In contrast, later on in the story, Drowne explained the figurehead of the lady, the "creature of my heart," by saying to Mr. Copley that a "wellspring of inward wisdom gushed within me as I wrought upon the oak with my whole strength, and soul, and faith."²⁶

²⁴Ibid., V, 91-92.

²⁵Ibid., p. 94.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 98-99.

Hawthorne envisioned great accomplishments for the artistic genius. The artist was creative. He helped men and nature to fulfill their potentialities; he finished creation. In the artist's work, one could see the harmonious cooperation between nature and art, each achieving its ideal in the other, yet maintaining its own entity. The following passage from "The Great Stone Face" sums up the qualities and abilities of the artist, and it is about the most positive and unrestrained statement that Hawthorne made about a poet:

Neither was the Great Stone Face forgotten, for the poet had celebrated it in an ode, which was grand enough to have been uttered by its own majestic lips. This man of genius, we may say, had come down from heaven with wonderful endowments. If he sang of a mountain, the eyes of all mankind beheld a mightier grandeur reposing on its breast, or soaring to its summit, than had before been seen there. If his theme were a lovely lake, a celestial smile had now been thrown over it, to gleam forever on its surface. If it were the vast old sea, even the deep immensity of its dread bosom seemed to swell the higher, as if moved by the emotions of the song. Thus the world assumed another and a better aspect from the hour that the poet blessed it with his happy ideas. The Creator had bestowed him, as the last best touch to his own handiwork. Creation was not finished till the poet came to interpret, and so complete it.

The effect was no less high and beautiful, when his human brethren were the subject of his verse. The man or woman, sordid with the common dust of life, who crossed his daily path, and the only child who played in it, were glorified if he beheld them in his mood of poetic faith. He showed the golden links of the great chain that intertwined them with an angelic kindred; he brought out the hidden traits of a celestial birth that made them worthy of such kind. Some, indeed, there were who thought to show the soundness of their judgment by affirming that all the beauty and dignity of the natural world existed only in the poet's fancy. Let such men speak for themselves, who undoubtedly appear to have been spawned forth by Nature with a contemptuous bitterness; she having plastered them up out of her refuse stuff, after all the swine were made. As respects all things else, the poet's ideal was the highest truth.²⁷

²⁷Ibid., III, 54-55.

Hawthorne's concept of a poet occasionally sounds Platonic. One of the more obvious points of contact with Plato's concept of the poet is that of inspiration. Hawthorne suggested the possibility of the artist's being inspired. Somewhat typical of Hawthorne, however, he did not press the matter far enough to advance beyond an equivocation in the matter. For the most part, Hawthorne referred to various abilities and the creative energy which enabled the artist to achieve things that otherwise one might suppose to have been inspired. But he never really discarded the possibility of genuine inspiration.

Hawthorne at times spoke of inspiration as if it were a constituent part of his concept of the artist, such as when he thanked God for inspiring the builder to make York Cathedral²⁸ and when he made statements like the following about the value of first sketches: "There is something more divine in these; for, I suppose, the first idea of a picture is real inspiration, and all the subsequent elaboration of the matter serves but to cover up the celestial gem with something that belongs to himself."²⁹ Other statements, however, such as the following are somewhat ambiguous: "She is a miracle. The sculptor must have wrought religiously, and have felt that something far beyond his own skill was working through his hand."³⁰ Although Hawthorne wrote that the artist must

²⁸English Notebooks, p. 545.

²⁹"French and Italian Notebooks," III, 499-500.

³⁰Ibid., II, 377.

have felt some kind of help, he did not say that the artist was actually inspired.

In most instances one can explain inspiration in Hawthorne as the result of the heat of creation, the illumination rising from the imaginative faculty at work, and the crowning effect of thorough craftsmanship. In "Drowne's Wooden Image, Copley, who came to understand the effect of the woman's beauty on Drowne and also Drowne's love for her, remarked to Drowne: "' . . . she inspired a genius into you, and first created the artist who afterwards created her image.'" In Drowne's case, love and passion inspired him and caused "the light of imagination and sensibility" to glow in his visage.³¹

Even Byron was inspired in the sense of possessing the illumination that comes from the creative flame. Commenting on Byron's having lost his critical sense, Hawthorne remarked in "P.'s Correspondence": "It so happened that the very passages of highest inspiration to which I had alluded were among the condemned and rejected rubbish which it is his purpose to cast into the gulf of oblivion. To whisper you the truth, it appears to me that his passions having burned out, the extinction of their vivid and riotous flame has deprived Lord Byron of the illumination by which he not merely wrote, but was enabled to feel and comprehend what he had written. Positively he no longer understands his own poetry."³²

³¹Works, V, 106.

³²Ibid., pp. 172-173.

In regard to good craftsmanship, commenting about the magnificent Westminster Bridge, Hawthorne thought that it could have been far more impressive if the architect had been able to realize the God-given happiness that comes from simple, honest craftsmanship--"the simple-hearted best efforts of man." About the bridge, Hawthorne wrote: "This is certainly a magnificent edifice; and yet I doubt whether it is so impressive as it might and ought to have been, considering its immensity. It makes no more impression than you can well account to yourself for, and rather wonder that it is not more. The reason must be, that the architect has not 'builded better than he knew'; there was no power higher and wiser than himself, making him its instrument;-- he reckoned upon and contrived all his effects, with malice aforethought, and therefore missed the crowning effect--that being a happiness which God, out of his pure grace, mixes up with only the simple-hearted best efforts of men."³³

In summary, to proceed beyond the occasionally ambiguous statements that Hawthorne made about the artist's being inspired, one can say that good craftsmanship and the energetic heat of the imagination and the creative process gave the effect of inspiration.

The effect of inspiration, if not inspiration itself, and genius were the culminating effects of the artist's poetic faculties working together. Emphasizing the full use of the artist's various powers,

³³English Notebooks, p. 249.

Hawthorne made the following statement in "Passages from a Relinquished Work" about the resources of the artist:

Hitherto I had immensely underrated the difficulties of my idle trade; now I recognized that it demanded nothing short of my whole powers, cultivated to the utmost and exerted with the same prodigality as if I were speaking for a great party or for the nation at large on the floor of the Capitol. No talent or attainment could come amiss; everything was requisite--wide observation, varied knowledge, deep thoughts and sparkling ones; pathos and levity, and a mixture of both, like sunshine in a raindrop; lofty imagination veiling itself in the garb of common life; and the practiced art which alone could render these gifts, and more than these, available. Not that I ever hoped to be thus qualified. But my despair was no ignoble one, for knowing the impossibility of satisfying myself, even should the world be satisfied, I did my best to overcome it; investigated the causes of every defect; and strove, with patient stubbornness, to remove them in the next attempt. It is one of my few sources of pride, that, ridiculous as the object was, I followed it up with the firmness and energy of a man.³⁴

Even aside from the contribution of craftsmanship to the effect of inspiration, Hawthorne understood that good craftsmanship was a necessary instrument for the artist to create his work. As he suggested in his comment in "The Procession of Life" about the authors "whose lofty gifts were unaccompanied with the faculty of expression, or any of that earthly machinery by which ethereal endowments must be manifested to mankind," the gifts of an artist were in effect useless unless they could be made

³⁴Works, V, 244-245.

useful through craftsmanship.³⁵

But an artist had to be more than just a craftsman. Peter Hovenden and Robert Danforth were craftsmen as well as Owen, although they lacked Owen's sensibility. Drowne was a good craftsman, but his craftsmanship was only a highly developed skill except as he responded passionately and imaginatively to his subject. As Hawthorne said about himself in the passage quoted above, he came to realize that every talent and power had to be exerted to the utmost and that he had to satisfy himself with a job well done without regard to the satisfaction of others.

Further, an artist had to maintain faith in himself. Like Hilda, who in her sympathetic copying "won out" the beauty and glory within the painting "by patient faith and self-devotion,"³⁶ the artist had to develop confidence in himself and his work. Hawthorne was aware of the

³⁵Ibid., IV, 307. About "the faculty of expression" itself Hawthorne said very little. As stated more fully in the chapter on form, Chapter VI, "The Work of Art," Hawthorne emphasized craftsmanship and the creative warmth of the heart which gave life to the mechanics of form. The importance of inspiration to form, e. g., is suggested in the following comment about the oratory of Jonathan Cilley: "Nothing could be less artificial than his style of oratory. After filling his mind with the necessary information he trusted everything else to his mental warmth and the inspiration of the moment, and poured himself out with an earnest and irresistible simplicity. There was a singular contrast between the flow of thought from his lips, and the coldness and restraint with which he wrote; and though, in mature life, he acquired a considerable facility in exercising the pen, he always felt the tongue to be his peculiar instrument." (Biographical Sketches, Works, XVII, 62-63.)

³⁶The Marble Faun, Works, IX, 80.

conflict of the artist and society as it became evident, for instance, in terms of the clash between the ideas of the imaginative artist like Owen and the practical matter-of-fact attitude of the unimaginative man like Peter Hovenden. In "The Artist of the Beautiful," Hawthorne wrote: "Thus it is that ideas, which grow up within the imagination and appear so lovely to it and of a value beyond whatever men call valuable, are exposed to be shattered and annihilated by contact with the practical. It is requisite for the ideal artist to possess a force of character that seems hardly compatible with its delicacy; he must keep his faith in himself while the incredulous world assails him with its utter disbelief; he must stand up against mankind and be his own sole disciple, both as respects his genius and the objects to which it is directed."³⁷ Keats, for example, was one that Hawthorne referred to, according to the misconception of the time, as an artist who did not have the "iron sinews" that great poets needed to face the onslaughts of the world.³⁸

An artist also needed time to develop. The young poet especially had to know himself and give himself time to mature. In "Hints to Young Ambition," Hawthorne critically warned the young poets who scurried to "the temple of fame." His advice for the young poet was that he "must not only build up a character, but also give it time to consolidate and harden" before he would be adequately prepared to meet the world

³⁷Works, V, 299-300.

³⁸"P.'s Correspondence," Ibid., p. 186.

and persevere.³⁹

Remaining steadfast and achieving success, the artist would find that art could be its own reward. Hawthorne would not have accepted the art for art's sake principle of late nineteenth-century aesthetes like Oscar Wilde. But art did have an end enjoyment in itself as long as it fulfilled its function to present truth and beauty. In "The Artist of the Beautiful," Hawthorne wrote that the world, whatever praise might be bestowed, "could never say the fitting word nor feel the fitting sentiment which should be the perfect recompense of an artist who, symbolizing a lofty moral by a material trifle,--converting what was earthly to spiritual gold,--had won the beautiful into his handiwork,"⁴⁰ but that when "the artist rose high enough to achieve the beautiful, the symbol by which he made it perceptible to mortal senses became of little value in his eyes while his spirit possessed itself in the enjoyment of the reality."⁴¹

The artist to Hawthorne, however, was not to remove himself from mankind. Society's lack of sympathy with the artist of the beautiful should not deter the artist from his work. Whether unimaginative men, like Peter Hovenden, believed that the artist wasted his time and talents on trifles, or whether they ignored the artist in their concern

³⁹Ibid., XVII, 240-241.

⁴⁰Ibid., V, 326.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 330.

with the exigencies of life, the artist was to continue to serve humanity. Hawthorne severely judged the artist who isolated himself from other people. The poet in "The Great Carbuncle," for instance, upon finding the jewel intended to go back to his London attic. That he eventually forfeited the warmth of nature and lost contact with humanity is reflected by his having taken from a sunless chasm a piece of ice which he swore corresponded to his idea of the Great Carbuncle. Later, in evaluating his poetry, the critics said that "if his poetry lacked the splendor of the gem, it retained all the coldness of the ice."⁴²

On the other hand, the acceptable artist, seemingly aloof to the crises of life transcended them in order to serve his people as they met those same crises. Such an artist was the painter Leutze, whom Hawthorne saw working on his fresco of America in the United States Capitol: "It was delightful to see him so calmly elaborating his design, while other men doubted and feared, or hoped treacherously, and whispered to one another that the nation would exist only a little longer, or that, if a remnant still held together, its centre and seat of government would be far northward and westward of Washington. But the artist keeps right on, firm of heart and hand, drawing his outlines with an unwavering pencil, beautifying and idealizing our rude, material life, and thus manifesting that we have an indefeasible claim to a more enduring national

⁴²Ibid., III, 220.

existence."⁴³

The artist's service to society emphasizes Hawthorne's belief in the artist's sympathetic allegiance to humanity. In another context, speaking about his own innate reserve, Hawthorne defined what was basic to his concept of the artist and the artist's function in society:

A cloudy veil stretches over the abyss of my nature, I have however, no love of secrecy and darkness. I am glad to think that God sees through my heart, and, if any angel has power to penetrate into it, he is welcome to know everything that is there. Yes, and so may any mortal who is capable of full sympathy, and therefore worthy to come into my depths. But he must find his own way there. I can neither guide nor enlighten him. It is this involuntary reserve, I suppose, that has given the objectivity to my writings; and when people think that I am pouring myself out in a tale or an essay, I am merely telling them what is common to human nature, not what is peculiar to myself. I sympathize with them, not they with me. . . .⁴⁴

Speaking chiefly about the artist in "The Prophetic Pictures," Mary E. Dichmann sums up the role of the artist in his service to humanity: "Because his 'vast requirements' have equipped the painter with tools for universal communication and understanding, he transcends the individual being and becomes a representation of the universal; he is a microcosm, or--to use a juster image, and one that is a favorite with Hawthorne himself--a mirror in which all men and all women find themselves reflected."⁴⁵

⁴³"Chiefly About War Matters," Works, XVII, 371.

⁴⁴American Notebooks, Works, XVIII, 425-426.

⁴⁵"Hawthorne's 'Prophetic Pictures,'" AL, XXIII (May 1951), p. 190.

The moral responsibility of the artist, however, was not as easily met as Hawthorne's comments on Leutze suggest. The prophetic painter discovered that the question of moral responsibility accented the dangerous path of his art in respect both to himself and society. Hawthorne expected the artist to have, as Kenyon did, a "quick sensibility."⁴⁶ Like the artist in "The Prophetic Pictures" the artist could often read faces, "look beneath the exterior" and "see the innermost soul."⁴⁷ But as Mary Dichmann points out, the painter was not an "agent of destiny among mankind" despite the "strong suggestions of the fatality of artistic powers," for the painter did keep his subject Walter from harming himself.⁴⁸

Hawthorne recognized the possible charge of an artist's being a

⁴⁶Works, IX, 262.

⁴⁷Ibid., I, 236.

⁴⁸"Hawthorne's 'Prophetic Pictures,'" p. 200.

magician, perhaps Satanic,⁴⁹ but he held to the function of the artist to ennoble, to be true, to have sympathy. In that respect, Hawthorne did not fully approve of the prophetic artist even though the artist took such an interest in Elinor and Walter that he "almost regarded them as creatures of his own." About the prophetic artist, Hawthorne wrote: "Though gentle in manner and upright in intent and action, he did not possess kindly feelings; his heart was cold; no living creature could be brought near enough to keep him warm." Hawthorne could never condone, and in most instances he condemned, the artist who "had no aim--no pleasure--no sympathies--but what were ultimately connected with his art."⁵⁰

⁴⁹"The Prophetic Pictures," Works, I, 227. See Thomas B. Brumbaugh's article "Concerning Nathaniel Hawthorne and Art as Magic," American Imago, XI (Winter 1954), 404, where he writes ". . .in Hawthorne the word artist can be equated with magician or witch."

See also Millicent Bell who, in the process of rescuing Hawthorne from Fogle and Male's over-emphasis on the idealistic-romantic influence, over-develops the necromantic-gothic influence on Hawthorne as she emphasizes what Waggoner has called the anti-romantic in Hawthorne. She writes: "The idealist seeker of eternal truths is flanked in Romantic thought by the necromantic Faustian figure who has bartered for knowledge with his soul. In Romantic Gothicism, we find the sinister twin of the ordained artist of Emerson and the English Romantics, a Magian figure whose knowledge is chthonian and whose works represent an illicit black magic. Hawthorne's artists, as well as his scholars and scientists, have a much closer relation to the Gothic figure of the evil necromancer than to the artist-ideal. . . .Like Faust, they seem to demonstrate that the power of knowledge which rivals God's own can work not only good, but harm. They practice an occultism which is the dark side of the Romantic quest, a criticism of it, perhaps, and not merely Gothic gooseflesh" (Hawthorne's View of the Artist, pp. 68-69).

⁵⁰Ibid., I, 240-241.

Hawthorne in general had high praise for artists, especially for the poet (literary artist). In "A Select Party" he called the "Master Genius" for whom America was looking "the worker of immortality."⁵¹ And in "Up The Thames," expressing his interest in the graves of poets, Hawthorne elevated the poet--the naver--who honoring and serving others brought immortality to himself:

I have never felt a similar interest in any other tombstones, nor have I ever been deeply moved by the imaginary presence of other famous dead people. A poet's ghost is the only one that survives for his fellow mortals, after his bones are in the dust,--and he not ghostly, but cherishing many hearts with his own warmth in the chilliest atmosphere of life. What other fame is worth aspiring for? Or, let me speak it more boldly, what other long-enduring fame can exist? We neither remember nor care anything for the past, except as the poet has made it intelligibly noble and sublime to our comprehension. The shades of the mighty have no substance; they flit ineffectually about the darkened stage where they performed their momentary parts, save when the poet has thrown his own creative soul into them, and imparted a more vivid life than ever they were able to manifest to mankind while they dwelt in the body. And therefore--though he continually disguises himself in their armor, their robes of state, or kingly purple--it is not the statesman, the warrior, or the monarch that survives, but the despised poet, whom they have fed with their crumbs, and to whom they owe all that they now are or have,--a name!⁵²

⁵¹Ibid., IV, 91.

⁵²Ibid., XI, 391-392.

CHAPTER V

THE PURPOSE AND CONTENT OF ART

Hawthorne did not formally make an issue of the purpose of art. Yet the purpose of art to him was an integral part of his whole theory. Generally speaking, one finds implicit in his statements about the various aspects of art a keen sensitivity to its function and effect. He believed that an artist should work seriously, and to Hawthorne any serious commitment was a moral commitment. Although he believed that the artist found satisfaction in the act of creating itself and in good craftsmanship, Hawthorne gave a more basic emphasis to the artist's obligation to ennoble and elevate nature and especially the life of man.

In a rather despondent mood, Hawthorne wrote the following in a letter (March 15, 1851) to Horatio Bridge about an artist's reputation and the end of literature: "How slowly I have made my way in life! How much is still to be done! How little worth--outwardly speaking--is all that I have achieved! The bubble reputation is as much a bubble in literature as in war, and I should not be one whit the happier if mine were world-wide and time-long than I was when nobody but yourself had faith in me. The only sensible ends of literature are, first, the pleasurable toil of writing; second, the gratification of one's family

and friends; and, lastly, the solid cash."¹ The statement intimates a side of Hawthorne the man, but it belies his fundamental and more characteristic attitude about the purpose of art. Besides the negative tone, the word "sensible" places a qualification on his remark to Bridge.

Hawthorne could never ignore the economic motive for writing. He desired to earn his living by writing, and to an extent he was able to. However, the need of earning a living never had a real place in his theory of art.² He recognized the burden of economic necessity as it imposed itself upon an artist,³ but to Hawthorne the problem affected the work itself, practice rather than theory. In terms of theory, his concern about the economic motive was the assurance that economic success gave to the artist. About some money from some undisclosed friends,

¹Horatio Bridge, Personal Recollections of Nathaniel Hawthorne (New York, 1893), p. 125.

²In an introductory note to Hawthorne's Works (I, xxxix), H. E. Scudder states: "Hawthorne's literary ventures in the magazines were made with a clear purpose to devote himself to writing as a profession, and he hoped to earn his livelihood by this means, but he was an artist in his work and free from a merely commercial attitude toward his productions."

³For example, in The Marble Faun (Works, IX, 181-182), Hawthorne wrote: "The public in whose good graces lies the sculptor's or the painter's prospects of success, is infinitely smaller than the public to which literary men make their appeal. It is composed of a very limited body of wealthy patrons; and these, as the artist well knows, are but blind judges in matters that require the utmost delicacy of perception. Thus, success in art is apt to become partly an affair of intrigue; and it is almost inevitable that even a gifted artist should look askance at his gifted brother's fame, and be chary of the good word that might help him to sell still another statue or picture."

in a letter (December 9, 1853) to George Stillman Hillard, Hawthorne wrote: "I have been grateful all along, and am more so now than ever. This act of kindness did me an unspeakable amount of good; for it came when I most needed to be assured that anybody thought it worth while to keep me from sinking."⁴ Furthermore, Hawthorne realized that an artist needed something in addition to economic success to write imaginative literature: "It will never do for me to continue merely a writer of stories for the magazines--the most unprofitable business in the world; and moreover, even if there were ever so great a demand for my productions, I could not spend more than a third of my time in this sort of composition. It requires a continual freshness of mind, else a deterioration in the article will quickly be perceptible."⁵

About Hawthorne's emphasis on the purpose of art and on the artist's moral responsibility to the audience, William White states the following: "Art's audience is not to be lightly dismissed. Whereas the artist need not cater to the low taste of the general public, he must recognize that his art has existence only in the minds and hearts of its perceivers. In striving to ferret out and formulate that which lies beneath the dross, the artist elects for himself the noblest profession--that of bringing truth and beauty to his fellow man. An artist who contents himself with the

⁴Ibid., XVII, 436.

⁵Ibid., p. 424.

art creation alone, rather than with the bonded duty of communication, desecrates his entire brotherhood."⁶

As pointed out in Chapter III, "Hawthorne's Concept of Art," in concentrating on the moral function of art Hawthorne emphasized the higher realities. He attempted to gain insights and directions in life by means of syntheses. He strove for a harmony of the actual and the imaginative, of the natural and the ideal. Presenting the ideal was to anticipate it, and to anticipate it helped to make the actual life more purposeful and gratifying. Hawthorne did not believe that it would be satisfying, for example, for "mother earth" to exist merely in idea.⁷ He anticipated a state in which there would be dignity and fulfillment. In "The Hall of Fantasy," he suggested an occasional visit to the hall "for the sake of spiritualizing the grossness of this actual life, and prefiguring to ourselves a state in which the Idea shall be all in all."⁸

Hawthorne gave more explicit expression to the role of the audience than he did to the purpose of art. He maintained that the audience made a definite contribution to the work itself. He did not believe that the existence of a work of art depended upon the sympathy and the understanding of the audience. But he consistently stated that the

⁶"The Personal Philosophy of Nathaniel Hawthorne," p. 153.

⁷Works, IV, 257.

⁸Ibid., p. 258.

audience had to give something to the work in order to finish it in the sense of deriving the most benefit from it. Actually, Hawthorne's emphasis on the audience's completing a work of art draws attention to indirection in art and the appeal to the audience's imagination. His point was that the audience had to give itself to the work in order to appreciate it fully:

A picture, however admirable the painter's art, and wonderful his power, requires of the spectator a surrender of himself, in due proportion with the miracle which has been wrought. Let the canvas glow as it may, you must look with the eye of faith, or its highest excellence escapes you. There is always the necessity of helping out the painter's art with your own resources of sensibility and imagination. Not that these qualities shall really add anything to what the master has effected; but they must be put so entirely under his control, and work along with him to such an extent, that, in a different mood, when you are cold and critical, instead of sympathetic, you will be apt to fancy that the loftier merits of the picture were of your own dreaming, not of his creation.⁹

Hawthorne's inadequate knowledge of the technicalities of painting and sculpture probably led him to go beyond an ordinary articulation of the viewer's need to cooperate with the artist. Hawthorne did not have the sensibility of many of his European counterparts. Like Mark Twain, Hawthorne did not particularly manifest all the refinements of culture. Although potentially Twain may have had more of an innate artistic sensitivity, Hawthorne was more aware of his need to learn. Hawthorne tended to be sympathetic rather than satiric. He knew that he had to give and to exert himself in order to learn what the artist had

⁹The Marble Faun, Works, X, 176.

accomplished or attempted to do. Presumably, he learned that he could more quickly come to an understanding of a work by trying to find its idea, its emotional center. After responding to the essence of the work, he could evaluate more proficiently how the artist handled his materials and what methods and principles he used. This probable procedure helps one to understand, in part, why Hawthorne emphasized as much as he did the audience's cooperation with the artist and its sympathy with the work itself. Needless to say, this approach enabled Hawthorne quite readily to detect any kind of artistic inadequacy and moral insincerity on the part of the artist. On the basis of Hawthorne's sensitivity to his unfamiliarity with the finer technicalities of painting and sculpture and of his own need as a beholder to cooperate, it is evident why his emphasis on the audience's cooperation is frequently in connection with the painter and the sculptor. Commenting in his notebooks about the Dying Gladiator, he wrote: "Like all other works of the highest excellence, however, it makes great demands upon the spectator; he must make a generous gift of his sympathies to the sculptor, and help out his skill with all his heart, or else he will see little more than a skillfully wrought surface."¹⁰

In the area of literature especially, however, Hawthorne respected the intimacy between the artist and the audience. Manuscripts, mementos,

¹⁰"French and Italian Notebooks," II, 129.

tombs and graveyards,¹¹ houses of poets were of special importance to Hawthorne because the poet's touch and association cast a spell over the beholder. Visiting Scott's home at Abbotsford, Hawthorne remarked that a house was forever spoiled as a home by having been the home of a great man, for: "His spirit haunts it, as it were, with a malevolent effect, and takes hearth and hall away from the nominal possessors, giving all the world the right to enter there because he had such intimate relations with all the world."¹²

Hawthorne himself sought out the "Gentle Reader" for whom he wrote year after year while the public in effect had overlooked his small productions.¹³ Although he cherished the bond with his audience, it was the "apprehensive sympathy" of his gentle reader that led him to become guardedly autobiographical.

About the charge of egotism because of various autobiographical remarks in his prefaces, Hawthorne believed that the criticism could not be justified. In a dedicatory letter (Nov. 1, 1851) to Horatio Bridge that introduced the volume of The Great Snow Image and Other Tales,

¹¹In the English Notebooks, p. 542, Hawthorne wrote: "I love to find the graves of men connected with literature, and find that they interest me more, even though of no great eminence, than those of persons far more illustrious in other walks of life. I know not whether this is because I happen to be one of the literary kindred, or because all men feel themselves akin and on terms of intimacy with those whom they know, or might have known, in books. I rather believe that the latter is the case."

¹²Ibid., p. 540. In Our Old Home (Works, XI, 272), Hawthorne remarked that a "poet has a fragrance about him such as no other human being is gifted withal; it is indestructible, and clings forevermore to everything that he has touched."

¹³Preface to The Marble Faun, Works, IX, xxii.

Hawthorne defended the external bits of autobiographical data that he had previously given by saying that a person would have to look more intensely and penetratingly into the works themselves to find the essential traits of the author:

And, as for egotism, a person who has been burrowing, to his utmost ability, into the depths of our common nature, for the purposes of psychological romance,--and who pursues his researches in that dusky region, as he needs must, as well by the tact of sympathy as by the light of observation,--will smile at incurring such an imputation in virtue of a little preliminary talk about his external habits, his abode, his casual associates, and other matters entirely upon the surface. These things hide the man, instead of displaying him. You must make quite another kind of inquest, and look through the whole range of his fictitious characters, good and evil, in order to detect any of his essential traits.¹⁴

On the one hand, Hawthorne did not approve of any undue personal expressions in an author's works, but on the other he relished the thawing and warming influence of the sympathetic reader who prompted the author to be less reserved. However, neither the reader's rights nor the author's were to be violated.¹⁵

Praise and fame, of course, were a form of nourishment for the artist. Hawthorne knew that a certain amount of fame was "humbug."¹⁶ Furthermore, by experience he learned that the scope of an artist's fame could be more limited than one expected. In "The Custom House," he wrote: "It is a lesson--though it may often be a hard one--for a man

¹⁴Works, III, xx.

¹⁵"Custom House," Works, VI, 2.

¹⁶"Passages from a Relinquished Work," Works, V, 250.

who has dreamed of literary fame, and of making for himself a rank among the world's dignitaries by such means, to step aside out of the narrow circle in which his claims are recognized, and to find how utterly devoid of significance, beyond that circle, is all that he achieves, and all he aims at. I know not that I especially needed the lesson, either in the way of warning or rebuke; but, at any rate, I learned it thoroughly. . . ."¹⁷

To Hawthorne, the world in general was inclined to give proportionately too little praise to literary men. After he had visited Westminster Abbey, he observed that the Poet's Corner "shows aptly and truly enough what portion of the world's regard and honor has hitherto been awarded to literature, in comparison with other modes of greatness--this little nook in the vast Minster (not even that more than half to themselves) the walls of which are sheathed and hidden behind the marble that has been sculptured for men once prominent enough, but now forgotten."¹⁸ However, a little praise, genuinely given, went a long way. In a letter (April 18, 1863) to Fields, Hawthorne stated: "You cannot imagine how a little praise jollifies us poor authors to the marrow of our bones."¹⁹

Hawthorne believed that the audience should be offered the best. Although he thought that the world was a coarse but not unkind one,²⁰

¹⁷Works, VI, 36.

¹⁸English Notebooks, p. 219.

¹⁹James C. Austin, ed., Fields of the Atlantic Monthly (San Marino, 1953), p. 227.

²⁰The Marble Faun, Works, X, 171.

he believed that the world should have the "highest word," the highest truth. Commenting on Keat's proposed work about "man's struggle of good and evil," which Keats--according to Hawthorne's understanding--withheld from the world "under an idea that the age has not enough of spiritual insight to receive it worthily," Hawthorne remarked: "I do not like this distrust; it makes me distrust the poet. The universe is waiting to respond to the highest word that the best child of time and immortality can utter. If it refuse to listen, it is because he mumbles and stammers, or discourses things unseasonable and foreign to the purpose."²¹ By implication in Hawthorne's statement, the poet had a moral responsibility toward his audience. The work of the artist was to embrace if not proclaim the highest word. The audience was to be trusted. The artist had to have faith that his age fundamentally had sufficient spiritual insight to be entrusted with the truth and to receive it worthily.

This insistence did not contradict Hawthorne's sensitivity about the likes and dislikes of his own public. Sensitive about his shadowy romances and allegories, he was concerned about the audience's taste for and reception of his forms, his genre within a genre, but he never concerned himself about the public's taste for what moral truths he desired to convey to them. To that end he felt that he should trust them.

²¹"p.'s Correspondence," Works, V, 188.

Although Hawthorne believed the artist should give man "the highest word" that a "child of time and immortality can utter," he did not restrict the subject matter of art. Hawthorne's guiding principle was that the content should be elevating and moral. However, the moral principle was not intended to censure subject matter but to give direction in the manner of treating it. Hawthorne believed that an artist should be morally and artistically capable of helping man to secure and maintain truths which were morally valid. In this respect, one should keep in mind Hawthorne's emphasis on the heart and on being true, and the fact that he believed the only valid reform to be a moral reform.

Within the scope set by the purpose of art, the artist was not particularly limited in his content. The following references suggest emphases in Hawthorne but also the free range of the artist's choice of subject matter. In "The Old Apple Dealer," Hawthorne (the narrator) spoke of "the soundless depths of the human soul and of eternity" that lodged in the apple dealer's mind and heart and had an opening in his breast.²² In a comment about Wakefield's retaining his original share of human sympathies and interests while having lost "his reciprocal influence on them," Hawthorne stated that it "would be a most curious speculation to trace out the effect of such circumstances on his heart

²²Works, V, 288.

and intellect, separately, and in unison."²³ Reviewing a volume of Thomas Hood's poetry, Hawthorne approved Hood's taking "for his material the most common sympathies of mankind."²⁴ In a letter to Longfellow (June 4, 1837), Hawthorne expressed a desire to see the real world: "I have another great difficulty, in the lack of materials; for I have seen so little of the world that I have nothing but thin air to concoct my stories of; and it is not easy to give a life-like semblance to such shadowy stuff. Sometimes, through a peep-hole I have caught a glimpse of the real world; and the two or three articles in which I have portrayed such glimpses, please me better than the others."²⁵

Hawthorne was conscious that temperamentally he responded to some materials better than to others. But at the same time he placed no qualifications on what other artists could respond to. For instance, in "Sketches from Memory," he expressed a regret that he was "shut out from the peculiar field of American fiction by an inability to see any romance, or poetry, or grandeur, or beauty in the Indian character, at least till such traits were pointed out by others." Nevertheless, he was willing to grant a permanent place to "the biographer of the Indian chiefs."²⁶

²³Ibid., I, 184.

²⁴Stewart, "Hawthorne's Contributions to The Salem Advertiser," p. 333.

²⁵Samuel Longfellow, Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (Boston, 1886), I, 255.

²⁶Works, V, 262-263.

Although Hawthorne frequently emphasized the common things in life, he did not confine the subject matter of art as long as moral truth was not compromised. He was interested in what an artist did with his material rather than in what material the artist chose. In conclusion, Hawthorne's following comment about an art exhibition that included old Dutch Masters discloses his acceptance and appreciation of an assortment of traditionally non-poetic objects:

Una and I spent an hour together, looking principally at the old Dutch Masters, who seem to me the most wonderful set of men that ever handled a brush. Such life-like representations of cabbages, onions, turnips, cauliflower, and peas; such perfect realities of brass kettles and kitchen crockery; such blankets, with the woolen fuzz upon them; such everything (except human face, which moreover is fairly enough depicted) I never thought that the skill of man could produce. Even the photograph cannot equal their miracles. The closer you look, the more minutely true the picture is found to be; and I doubt if even the microscope could see beyond the painter's touch. Gerard Dow seems to be the master among these queer magicians. A straw mat, in one of his pictures, is the most miraculous thing that human art has yet accomplished; and there is a metal vase with a dent in it, that is absolutely more real than reality. These painters accomplish all they aim at--a praise, methinks, which can be given to no other men since the world began. They must have laid down their brushes with perfect satisfaction, knowing that each one of their million touches had been necessary to the effect, and that there was not one too little or too much. And it is strange how spiritual, and suggestive the commonest household article--an earthen pitcher, for example--becomes when represented with entire accuracy. These Dutchmen get at the soul of common things, and so make them types and interpreters of the spiritual world.²⁷

²⁷ English Notebooks, p. 556.

CHAPTER VI

THE WORK OF ART

Just as Hawthorne did not restrict the content of art provided that it serve an ennobling purpose, so he did not restrict the forms that an artist could use. His emphasis again centered on the warmth, passion, and excitement of the genius or inspiration with which the artist approached his work and imbued it with life. Hawthorne stressed the invigorating and stimulating power of the emotions over that of the intellect, and accordingly his primary requirement was that the form should reflect warmth of feeling.

For this reason, Hawthorne consistently preferred the gothic to the classic. He appreciated the efficiency of line and movement in the classic style. He thoroughly approved of the simplicity, orderliness, and the stark beauty of its art, but it appealed to his intellect rather than to his emotions. His response to the classic style was either short-lived or altogether cold. Hawthorne's attitude and rather uncompromising judgment about the alternative of the gothic and the classic is expressed by Eustace's defense of himself to Mr. Pringle in A Wonder-Book: "'And besides,' continued Eustace, 'the moment you put any warmth of heart, any passion, or affection, any human or divine morality,

into a classic mould, you make it quite another thing from what it was before. My own opinion is, that the Greeks, by taking possession of these legends (which were the immemorial birth-right of mankind), and putting them into shapes of indestructible beauty, indeed, but cold and heartless, have done all subsequent ages an incalculable injury."¹

Hawthorne's remarks in general about the primacy of the emotions over the intellect did not keep him from acknowledging the universality of experience as depicted in classical art. Giving credit to the emotions over the intellect as comprising that which was universal was a matter of emphasis, not an alternative. Except in respect to his own appreciation, Hawthorne did not slight the success and validity of Greek art.

Although he appreciated the gothic more than the classic, essentially he placed no restriction on form. Any form was potentially acceptable as long as it was permeated with warmth and served the purpose well, i. e., the purpose of the work per se. In his review of Longfellow's Evangeline, for instance, Hawthorne initially stated that the "cumbersome measure" of the hexameter would give an adverse impression to many readers at first glance. But after pointing out how "beautifully plastic" the hexameter became in Longfellow's hands and "how thought and emotion incorporate and identify themselves with it," he concluded by saying: "Indeed, we cannot conceive of the poem as existing

¹Works, XIII, 153.

in any other measure."² Thus when there was a fruitful harmony of form and content, the kind of form became secondary.

Even a form that was in itself quite crude and demonstrative of unskilled craftsmanship could become pleasing, over and beyond either its primitive or quaint qualities, because of its expression of heartfelt emotions. Commenting about the gravestones on Martha's Vineyard, Hawthorne, after referring to the old Gothic monuments supposedly brought from London and also to more recent monuments of mere slabs of slate, remarked: "But others--and those far the most impressive both to my taste and feelings--were roughly hewn from the gray rocks of the island, evidently by the unskilled hands of surviving friends and relatives."³ On those stones were engraved the ordinary eulogies, but in letters that were copied from the record written in the hearts of the laborers.

There are three general emphases in Hawthorne's remarks about the work of art itself: (1) richness and profusion of detail, (2) the majesty and grandeur of a unified design, and (3) the realistic quality of minute objects, such as found in the paintings of the Dutch masters. The richness of detail struck closest to Hawthorne's heart in that for him those details were closely associated with the emotional quality that was integral to his aesthetic response. Among the various qualities that

²Hubert H. Hoeltje, "Hawthorne's Review of Evangeline," NEQ, XXIII (June 1950), 235. (The review is quoted in full from The Salem Advertiser, Nov. 13, 1847.)

³"Chippings With a Chisel," Works, II, 240.

a gothic cathedral suggested to him, richness seemed to be the most dominant one. In Our Old Home, Hawthorne wrote: "A Gothic cathedral is surely the most wonderful work which mortal man has yet achieved, so vast, so intricate, and so profoundly simple, with such strange, delightful recesses in its grand figure, so difficult to comprehend within one idea, and yet all so consonant that it ultimately draws the beholder and his universe into its harmony. It is the only thing in the world that is vast and rich enough."⁴

About the Cathedral at Siena Hawthorne wrote: "But what I wish to express, and never can, is the multitudinous richness of the ornamentation of the front; the arches within arches, sculptured inch by inch, of the deep doorways. . .the thousand forms of Gothic fancy, which seemed to soften stone, and express whatever it liked, and then let it harden again to last forever."⁵ In this gothic cathedral, Hawthorne found the universal and the abstract combined with the particular and the concrete, all details unified by design in a majestic whole: "A majesty and a minuteness, neither interfering with the other; each assisting the other; this is what I love in Gothic architecture."⁶

The minuteness and realistic detail never lost their appeal to Hawthorne. As Maurice Charney in his article "Hawthorne and the Gothic

⁴Ibid., XI, 180.

⁵"French and Italian Notebooks," III, 555.

⁶Ibid.

Style" suggests, Hawthorne appreciated the medieval artisan who pursued "his love of detail seemingly for its own sake as a glorification of God's creation."⁷ Hawthorne found this love of detail and glorification of God's creation also in the "pretty miracles" of the Dutch masters in whose paintings "often. . .there is a bird's nest, every straw perfectly represented, and the stray feathers, or the down that the mother bird plucked from her bosom, with the three or four small speckled eggs, that seem as if they might be yet warm."⁸

But the whole was never to be sacrificed for the sake of the profuse richness of ornamentation and the minute realism of detail. Actually this richness and realistic detail were to culminate in one grand design so that the work as a whole would come alive. What so thoroughly impressed Hawthorne, for instance, about the sculpture Venus de Medici was the absolute unity of design whereby the figure became alive with all the gracefulness that one can imagine, one that was not imposed but wrought from within.⁹

Moreover, besides stressing that a form should be given life and warmth and be in harmony with whatever experience or idea the artist wished to express, Hawthorne emphasized smoothness, clarity, and

⁷NEQ, XXIV (March 1961), 41.

⁸"French and Italian Notebooks," II, 389.

⁹Ibid., pp. 362-364.

naturalism of style. To achieve these qualities, as pointed out before, it was essential that the artist, in addition to having soul and heart, be a good craftsman. Nature was the ideal guide for good craftsmanship and a fine style: "Man's finest workmanship, the closer you observe it, the more imperfections it shows; as in a piece of polished steel a microscope will discover a rough surface. Whereas, what may look coarse and rough in Nature's workmanship will show an infinitely minute perfection, the closer you look into it. The reason of the minute superiority of Nature's work over man's is, that the former works from the innermost germ, while the latter works merely superficially."¹⁰

As Hawthorne's comments about the garden at Blenheim indicate, he did not particularly enjoy the irregularity of primitive nature. Nature provided the principle and the guidelines, but Hawthorne especially favored nature when it portrayed the regularity of art or cooperated with art to produce a perfection of form. About the Salisbury Cathedral, Hawthorne remarked that the multitudinous gray pinnacles and towers "ascend towards Heaven with a kind of natural beauty, not as if man had contrived them." Yet man's artful cooperation with nature was apparent. For although--as Hawthorne said--one might fancy the spires to have grown up as spires of a tuft of grass, at the same time "they have a law or propriety and regularity among themselves." The final effect of art's putting the crown on nature's handiwork was that the

¹⁰American Notebooks, Works, XVIII, 108-109.

"tall spire is of such admirable proportion that it does not seem gigantic" and "the effect of the whole edifice is of beauty, rather than weight and massiveness."¹¹

Form, then, for Hawthorne had to be natural to the idea expressed and in harmony with nature itself. Further, the concept of the organic unity of a work of art underlay Hawthorne's concept of style. All the parts of the whole were to flower out spontaneously "as natural incidents of a grand beautiful design."¹² To stray outside the bounds of nature was to take the chance of falling into a fad. After remarking about the disagreeableness of Bernini's statue of Pluto "ravishing away" Proserpine--although he recognized Bernini's powers--Hawthorne wrote: "There are some works in literature that bear an analogy to his works in sculpture--where great power is lavished, a little outside of nature, and therefore proves to be only a fashion, and not permanently adapted to the tastes of mankind."¹³

Sensitive to anything unnatural, Hawthorne often criticized pieces of sculpture that presented a human being or an animal in an unnatural movement. It was not natural, for example, that an animal or man should be in a state of movement which in actuality could only be a temporary one. Kenyon's remark about the unnatural position of the Dying Gladiator--

¹¹English Notebooks, p. 356.

¹²Ibid., p. 541.

¹³"French and Italian Notebooks," II, 169.

"I find myself getting weary and annoyed that the man should be such a length of time leaning on his arm in the very act of death"--expressed Hawthorne's attitude about such works of sculpture. Kenyon proceeded to say in explanation: "If he is so terribly hurt, why does he not sink down and die without further ado? Flitting moments, imminent emergencies, imperceptible intervals between two breaths, ought not to be incrustated with the eternal repose of marble; in any sculptural object, there should be a moral standstill, since there must of necessity be a physical one. Otherwise, it is like flinging a block of marble up into the air, and, by some trick of enchantment, causing it to stick there. You feel that it ought to come down, and are dissatisfied that it does not obey the natural law."¹⁴

Hawthorne's insistence on that which is natural enables one to understand some of the critical statements that he made about sculpture. He frequently disapproved of nude statues for moral reasons. But his reasons were based on nature as well as on moral principles. Some critics may react to what they consider prudishness on Hawthorne's part, but it is not fair to Hawthorne on the grounds of prudishness alone to disagree with his comments about nude statues.

He believed that what was natural, as long as it was not gross or vulgar, was not necessarily immoral. Although he insisted on art that was not immoral, his objection to nude statues was an objection to the

¹⁴Works, IX, 17.

nakedness of people to whom it was unnatural to be undressed. Speaking through Miriam (an assumption based on the tone and on Miriam's rather masculine observation about "guilty glimpses"), Hawthorne remarked: "Nowadays people are as good as born in their clothes, and there is practically not a nude human being in existence. An artist, therefore, as you must candidly confess, cannot sculpture nudity with a pure heart, if only because he is compelled to steal guilty glimpses at hired models. The marble inevitably loses its chastity under such circumstances. An old Greek sculptor, no doubt, found his models in the open sunshine, and among pure and princely maidens, and thus the nude statues of antiquity are as modest as violets, and sufficiently draped in their own beauty."¹⁵ In other words, where nudity was natural, nude statues were not morally objectionable either as far as the sculptor or the viewer was concerned.

One must realize that Hawthorne was fairly sensitive to what he considered to be the limitations of sculpture as a fine art. Although he occasionally expressed the belief that sculpture was at a low ebb and might just as well be given up as a beautiful thing that the world had done with,¹⁶ he knew what the possibilities of sculpture were and how great an art form it could be if the sculptor was true to the art of sculpture itself. As Kenyon's reply to Miriam's charge indicates--that sculptors were the greatest plagiarists in the world,--Hawthorne would

¹⁵Ibid., IX, 168.

¹⁶"French and Italian Notebooks," II, 247.

not altogether give up the art: "But as long as the Carrara quarries still yield pure blocks, and while my own country has marble mountains, probably as fine in quality, I shall steadfastly believe that future sculptors will revive this noblest of the beautiful arts, and people the world with new shapes of delicate grace and massive grandeur."¹⁷ In "The New Adam and Eve," Hawthorne remarked: "Sculpture, in its highest excellence, is more genuine than painting, and might seem to be evolved from a natural germ, by the same law as a leaf or flower."¹⁸

In regard to the finer characteristics of style or form in the narrow sense, Hawthorne continued to follow nature. In a letter to Ticknor (Nov. 9, 1855), he commented favorably on Longfellow's "Hiawatha" and wrote that Longfellow "seems to have caught the measure and rhythm from the sound of the wind among the forest boughs."¹⁹ The measure, the rhythm, sound, the harmony, the music of nature pleased him. In "The New Adam and Eve" he spoke of "the tones of an Aeolian harp, through which Nature pours the harmony that lies concealed in her every breath."²⁰

Hawthorne has often been said to have had no appreciation of music. The evidence does not necessarily support the general comments that are frequently made, occasionally in an off-hand way. Hawthorne did not have

¹⁷Works, IX, 170.

¹⁸Ibid., V, 16.

¹⁹Hawthorne and Publisher, p. 158.

²⁰Works, V, 14.

a technical knowledge of music. It is true that he commented on music very little as compared to all that he said about painting and sculpture. The point is that it is not necessarily just to write off any appreciation of music on Hawthorne's part.²¹ One might remember that Hawthorne was not a cultured man in a more refined sense. Although he did not have a technical knowledge of and a sophisticated ear for music, he had an idea what it was especially when it was associated with nature and when he could listen to it without externally being restrained or disturbed.

About music in nature, Hawthorne wrote: "A bird rose out of the grassy field, and, still soaring aloft, made a cheery melody that was like a spire of audible flame,--rapturous music, as if the whole soul and substance of the winged creature had been distilled into this melody, as it vanished skyward."²² About hymn singing and his lack of technical knowledge of music, Hawthorne made the following comment in "Sunday at Home": "Hark! the hymn. This, at least, is a portion of the service which I can enjoy better than if I sat within the walls, where the full choir and the massive melody of the organ would fall with a weight upon me. At this distance it thrills through my frame and plays upon my heart strings with a pleasure both of the sense and the spirit. Heaven be praised, I know nothing of music as a science; and the most

²¹Stewart, Biography, pp. 7-8. Many comments similar to Stewart's apparently are traceable to Stewart. Unfortunately for what has been taken to be an authoritative biography, Stewart's contains numerous value judgments that are not always adequately documented.

²²Doctor Grimshaws Secret, Works, XV, 160.

elaborate harmonies, if they please me, please as simply as a nurse's lullaby. The strain has ceased, but prolongs itself in my mind with fanciful echoes till I start from my reverie, and find that the sermon has commenced."²³

Understanding that Hawthorne did not find music unenjoyable, to return to matters of form and style, one can appreciate Julian's remark that his father always enjoyed DeQuincey's writings, for "the music of the style pleased him, and the smoothness and finish of the thought."²⁴

Again, good craftsmanship was essential. The fountain of Trevi in Rome with its "careful art and ordered irregularly," to Hawthorne, "was as magnificent a piece of work as ever human skill contrived."²⁵ Any loss of clarity and order, any amount of confusion, drew attention to poor workmanship as reflected in Hawthorne's criticism of Scott's late romances: ". . .there is now and then a touch of the genius,--a striking combination of incident, or a picturesque trait of character, such as no other man alive could have hit off,--a glimmer from that ruined mind, as if the sun had suddenly flashed on a half-rusted helmet in the gloom of an ancient hall. But the plots of these romances become inextricably confused; the characters melt into one another; and the tale loses itself like the course of a stream flowing through muddy

²³Works, I, 22.

²⁴Hawthorne and Wife, II, 8.

²⁵The Marble Faun, Works, IX, 199.

and marshy ground."²⁶

About diction, sentence structure, imagery, Hawthorne made no particular comments. In general, he believed that language was not adequate for a full expression of "the higher regions of emotion and spiritual enjoyment."²⁷ In the American Notebooks, he wrote that human language was little better than the "utterances of brute nature" and sometimes not so adequate.²⁸ With transcendental overtones, about the inexpressible beauty of God's creation--in this instance, the valley below Perugia--he wrote: "Nor language, nor any art of the pencil, can give an idea of the scene; when God expressed Himself in this landscape to mankind, He did not intend that it should be translated into any tongue save His own immediate one."²⁹

Hawthorne evidently believed that other than the general rules of nature and art, such as unity, clarity, coherence, smoothness, and so on, the specific dictates for such work should come from the work itself. Each work depended directly on the warmth and passion of the artist and on good craftsmanship. A work had to have life, and if it did then its form, its style, was valid. Millicent Bell writes that Hawthorne's

²⁶"P.'s Correspondence," Works, V, 177-178.

²⁷The Marble Faun, Ibid., X, 65.

²⁸P. 130.

²⁹"French and Italian Notebooks," II, 306-307.

"own comments on art reveal that he was interested chiefly in the character of the artist's inspiration rather than in the technical qualities of the art-work."³⁰

Although Hawthorne was a moral writer, in his best works, he was not a didactic one in that the moral was either forced or appended. Hawthorne believed that the moral should be implicit. As regards The Marble Faun neither his defense of its indirection nor the execution of the romance was successful. However, he believed that meaning should be implicit in the structure. In his preface to The House of the Seven Gables, he expressed his adherence to indirection as a principle of good art:

When romances do really teach anything, or produce any effective operation, it is usually through a far more subtle process than the ostensible one. The author has considered it hardly worth his while, therefore, relentlessly to impale the story with its moral as with an iron rod,--or, rather, as by sticking a pin through a butterfly,--thus at once depriving it of life, and causing it to stiffen in an ungainly and unnatural attitude. A high truth, indeed, fairly, finely, and skillfully wrought out, brightening at every step, and crowning the final development of a work of fiction, may add an artistic glory, but is never any truer, and seldom any more evident, at the last pages than at the first.³¹

Commenting about poetry, Hilda remarked that the highest merit of works of art is their suggestiveness.³² In a letter to Mrs. Peabody

³⁰ Hawthorne's View of the Artist, p. 39.

³¹ Works, VIII, xxii-xxiii.

³² Ibid., X, 237.

Sophia wrote that her husband was rather ashamed of "The Great Stone Face" because of "the mechanical structure of the story, the moral being so plain and manifest."³³ With The Scarlet Letter--even though he thought that The House of the Seven Gables was better--Hawthorne could have been more satisfied than what he claimed to be with "The Great Stone Face." The Scarlet Letter was not only an achievement of indirection but also the consummation of Hawthorne's own theory of art. Newton Arvin wrote: "What gives this first of his four chief romances its unique position of greatness in Hawthorne's work is the intense integrity of its tragic effect, the strictness with which the painful implications of the theme are allowed to work themselves out to the last bitter stroke."³⁴

The Scarlet Letter demonstrates Hawthorne's theory in that it contains an implicit moral, has a life of its own and a rich texture, and demonstrates good craftsmanship. But it has more than what Hawthorne suggested in his own statements effecting a theory of art, and that is artistic ambiguity, symbolism and allegory, and irony.

Hawthorne had no place for artistic ambiguity in his theory. Furthermore, other than recognizing the fact of allegory in his own writings, such as in "The Threefold Destiny," and in connection with other writers of the past,³⁵ he did not speak of allegory and even symbolism as being

³³Hawthorne and Wife, I, 354.

³⁴Hawthorne (Boston, 1929), p. 192.

³⁵Works, II, 329.

either an accessory or an essential to an acceptable art or theory of art. These observations lead to a review of certain aspects of Hawthorne's practice.

CHAPTER VII

HAWTHORNE'S PRACTICE COMPARED TO HIS THEORY

The purpose of this chapter is to give an overview of Hawthorne's practice. In his works, he carried out his theory of art. His moral emphasis is reflected throughout. His concern about the expression of beauty and truth is consistently demonstrated. By his own imaginative approach to his incidents and themes, he substantiated his emphasis on the artist's warmth of heart and imaginative sympathy. However, there are three characteristics of his practice which are not included in his theory. They are (1) irony, (2) symbolism and allegory, and (3) artistic ambiguity. After a review of Hawthorne's practice, a reconciliation of theory and practice in regard to these three techniques will be considered in the following chapter.

True to his emphasis on the investigation of moral truth, Hawthorne in his stories concerned himself primarily with a moral. To move freely in the moral world was natural to him because of his temperament and interests. Hawthorne's intimacy with the moral world is shown by his penetrating, as James says, far beyond "the mere accidents and

conventionalities, the surface occurrences of life."¹ Hawthorne cared for the "deeper psychology," the moral implications of the real world of good and evil. That Hawthorne settled for the implications of moral truth rather than attempted to isolate the bare truth itself reflects his habit of mind and corresponds with his frequent use of artistic ambiguity. However, Hawthorne cannot be said to be shallow, and his moving easily in the occasionally mysterious realm of moral reality emphasizes the basic importance of the moral idea in his practice and theory. As James says, it also "constitutes the originality of his tales."²

Hawthorne's procedure in following out the moral implications was analytic. He did not spend much time in determining and studying motivations and actions as they anticipated and culminated in the crucial or climactic event or decision. In Hawthorne's stories the crucial action has already occurred, e. g., Hester and Dimmesdale's sin of adultery, Miriam's secret past. As H. C. MacDowall states: "Hawthorne's world is the world of moral consequences; all his stories are sequels. The main action, or what almost anyone else would call the main action, has always taken place round the last bend of the road; all that we are allowed to see of it is its after-effect. He begins where for most writers all is over."³

¹Hawthorne, p. 51.

²Ibid.

³"Nathaniel Hawthorne," Macmillan, XC (July 1904), 235-236.

To say that Hawthorne's stories are sequels does not mean that there is a minimum of climactic scenes. The point is that the dramatic climaxes are internal rather than external. As Stewart observes: "With external, covert acts of sinful or criminal nature, Hawthorne has very little to do."⁴ Moreover, one has to keep in mind that Hawthorne was interested not so much in what was going to happen as in an understanding of why such things happened. For instance, "Young Goodman Brown" is the dramatic portrayal of young Brown, who evidently made some sort of agreement with a mysterious personage whereby he morally compromised himself. The bulk of the story deals with the moral consequences of Young Goodman Brown's compromise. To illustrate further, although the climactic scene in the story "Roger Malvin's Burial" is Reuben Bourne's shooting his son in atonement for his own sin, the core action is Reuben's leaving Roger Malvin to die alone in the forest. The main part of the story centers attention on the moral consequences, which then were resolved for Reuben at least by the shooting. "Wakefield" speaks for itself. In "The Birthmark," one follows the action after Aylmer has become offended by his wife's one visible mark of imperfection. In "The Minister's Black Veil," the reader sees the results of the minister's having put on the veil.

In regard to stories such as "Rappaccini's Daughter," one may raise the question about the story's being a sequel to the main action. However, the story is the working out of Rappaccini's experiment, for as the

⁴American Notebooks, p. lxxii.

story opens, Beatrice has already begun to breathe the perfumes of the deadly plants in the garden. Similarly in "Lady Eleanor's Mantle," one observes the consequences of Lady Eleanor's pride and her contagious mantle as they affect others as well as herself.

Hawthorne's tendency to follow the moral consequences to their conclusion--which may be positive as in "Egotism, or the Bosom Serpent," negative as in "Rappaccini's Daughter," or a realistic compromise as in "The Maypole of Merry Mount"--leads to another observation. Waggoner states that Hawthorne had the "habit of slowing down the action until we can study its minutest aspect, analyze it from all sides, and realize, among other things, its connections with the past and its foreshadowing of the future."⁵ A noted example of slowing down the action is the greater part of a chapter devoted to the few minutes between Hepzibah's leaving Judge Pyncheon in the parlor to summon Clifford and her return to find the Judge dead.

Hawthorne would not be hurried in his analysis. He followed the various selected details that filled out the moral as well as artistic texture of the story, and at the same time he weighed the moral factors involved in anticipation of the story's structural resolution. His consistent use of the external, omniscient point of view enabled him to investigate at his own pace, to pretend disbelief with the reader, to report the case as he claimed to have heard it, but always to point to the

⁵A Critical Study, p. 165.

moral facts of the drama.

Realizing that the moral action or the internal action is primary in Hawthorne's stories and that the external action is secondary, one can understand why Hawthorne at times sacrificed the artistic qualities for the sake of the moral or theme. It must be remembered that Hawthorne characterized himself as a writer of romances, which in contrast to novels, permitted him--according to his definitions--"a certain latitude." In addition, he used many external methods which of themselves expedite the melodramatic. Although Hawthorne did not write melodramas such as Charles Brockden Brown's Wieland, his use of allegory, the supernatural and the gothic, and his losing interest in a character for the sake of a moral, along with other such things, contributed to the melodramatic character of his stories. One becomes particularly aware that Hawthorne sacrificed literary techniques for the sake of a moral whenever he apparently lost interest in a character or an incident (the plot) because the center of moral attention shifted elsewhere. An example is the idyllic ending of The House of The Seven Gables. For Hawthorne, the chief interest was consummated at the time of Judge Pyncheon's death when Hepzibah and Clifford were released from his power. At that time the moral consequences of the Pyncheon-Maule feud were resolved. Phoebe's marrying Holgrave was a nice but an unessential ending to the story, an ending which, like the "Conclusion" of The Scarlet Letter, may have reflected an economic motive.

In regard to Hawthorne's sacrificing his characters because of his moral interest, Marius Bewley writes: "Hawthorne was interested in the

psychology of his characters only insofar as he could use it as a stage on which certain complex moral problems could be dramatically enacted. The final effect of that enactment is that the individual characters themselves dissolve in the transcendent interest of the problem they dramatize."⁶ His best works, however, such as The Scarlet Letter, "Young Goodman Brown," "Roger Malvin's Burial," "Rappaccini's Daughter," are structurally as well as morally good when external action--even though occasionally melodramatic--harmonizes with internal action (his moral interest).

Hawthorne's themes are not numerous. In general, they are the consequences of sin, the psychological and moral aspects of guilt, intellectual and moral pride, hypocrisy, and the balance of the head and the heart. In one sense, they all deal with sin. Hawthorne was unlike Hardy, who complained of the presence of evil and blamed God for it; Conrad, who insisted that man realize the fact of evil in an inscrutable world but then settled back in a more or less resigned acceptance of it; and Melville, who in Ahab's words wanted to see what was behind the pasteboard mask whether agent or principle. Hawthorne simply considered the fact of sin itself and its moral implications in the lives of men.

Even aside from one's interest in the beliefs of an artist and the working of his mind, a study of Hawthorne inevitably leads to a curiosity about how Hawthorne's mind worked. Questions that arise include his

⁶"Hawthorne and 'The Deeper Psychology,'" p. 366.

consistent interest in the world of moral consequences, his tendency to respond creatively to moral rather than aesthetic stimulants, and the quality of his imagination. These three involve each other. Hawthorne's imagination responded creatively to moral problems. Fogle remarks that Hawthorne "proceeds to test" a doctrine, belief, or a moral proposition by means of the imagination.⁷ James perhaps more pointedly states the case when he concludes that Hawthorne "combined in a singular degree spontaneity of the imagination with a haunting care for moral problems."⁸

Hawthorne's faculty of the imagination suggests an introspective habit of mind. In accord with the point that he made in his theory that deep brooding thought should go into a work, his own practice reveals his brooding imagination. The way that he handled his point of view, for example, reflects the imaginative, introspective habit of mind. Also, one can perceive by the sudden artificial tone whenever Hawthorne seems to have lost imaginative sympathy with and interest in his characters and incidents (actually the moral interest again), e. g., the last chapter of The Scarlet Letter. Further, Hawthorne's characters have a reflective frame of mind and an imagination that is inclined to brood. Of course, one must keep in mind that brooding (inclination to despair) is one of several psychological reactions to sin's guilt; another is false elation. In regard to the characters' being objective dramatic projections

⁷ Hawthorne's Fiction, p. 80.

⁸ Hawthorne, p. 145.

of Hawthorne's own mind, Stewart speaks of the recurrence of character traits in Hawthorne's characters and states that this fact is strong evidence for "Hawthorne's introspective habit of mind."⁹ About Hawthorne's characters, Rose Weiffenbach observes: "Hawthorne could not realize anyone who could not reflect as he himself did. He, consciously or unconsciously, imposed his own habit of mind upon his personalities and added the psychopathic emphasis. His people are never really articulate except in reflection."¹⁰

An interesting omission from Hawthorne's theory of art is irony. In his comments about art, he did not single out irony as a technique. Although he was certainly concerned about the divergence between the actual and the ideal, Hawthorne himself did not hold an ironic view of life as such. Yet irony plays a great part in his practice. When one considers that Hawthorne's interest was in moral consequences, it is not surprising that one should find irony in his stories. That Hawthorne was a conscious ironist while he was in the process of creating would be difficult to prove but perhaps more difficult to disprove. For irony is abundant in his stories, and there can hardly be any question about his being aware of that fact. His perceiving the irony in many of his tales and his awareness of its contribution to the structural development of

⁹American Notebooks, p. lxvii.

¹⁰"A Technical Analysis of Hawthorne's Style," Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation (Boston Univ., 1939), p. 257.

some of his works--such as the irony of Dimmesdale's interrogation of Hester in the first scaffold scene--seems unavoidable.

Although it is difficult to ascertain to what degree or extent Hawthorne consciously used irony, its place in his works the tales and novels themselves testify. About dramatic irony, Robert Stanton claims that "it is one of the most frequent, flexible, and important literary devices in his four major romances." Proceeding to define three levels or stages of dramatic irony, Stanton then concludes that Hawthorne used the third level almost exclusively. About the three levels of dramatic irony, Stanton writes:

First, any situation is ironic, to some extent, if it involves a diametrical contrast between appearance and reality, expectation and event, or intention and accomplishment. Irony at this level adds emphasis and interest to a story. Second, a higher degree of irony appears, most logically connected, as in Oedipus Rex, in which the fulfillment of Oedipus' fate results from his attempt to escape that fate. Irony at this level gives a story structure as well as emphasis. Third, dramatic irony reaches its highest degree, I believe, when it carries a share of the theme, i. e., when the reader perceives, in addition to the logical connection between the contrasted elements, a moral connection. Macbeth's crimes of ambition are linked to his downfall not only as cause and effect but as sin and punishment.¹¹

All three levels of irony are found in Hawthorne's works, but as Stanton says the third level describes Hawthorne's irony most exactly. Examples from the shorter works of the third level are Aylmer in "The Birthmark" and Brand in "Ethan Brand."

The irony in Hawthorne's works points up Hawthorne's emphasis on

¹¹"Dramatic Irony in Hawthorne's Romances," MLN, LXXI (June 1956), 420.

the difference between the actual and the imaginative. By the imaginative, Hawthorne did not mean the fanciful in particular, but a certain leeway whereby he could indirectly deal with the facts, the higher realities of life if not always the actualities as the naturalist, for example, would see them. Hawthorne's practice accords with his theory in this respect. He desired to spiritualize the material. He sought to investigate life. By emphasizing the moral, he achieved a sense of the real and the actual in psychological-moral terms even though he wrote allegories and romances rather than novels. Evidently recognizing Hawthorne's expression of preference for the beef and ale of Trollope's novels, with reference to "Hawthorne's artistic aversion to realism," i. e., naturalism, Jesse Bier says that to Hawthorne "the Romance was the prose vehicle that would not so much shy away from reality as it would aim for a superreality" that was not confined to the here and now.¹²

Hawthorne's dealing with realities, although not always the actualities of life, emphasizes that which Q. D. Leavis refers to as the "incorruptibly relevant" in his work.¹³ Indeed, Hawthorne's universality is undisputed. Even George Woodberry, who believed that Hawthorne relied more on fancy than on the imagination and who found Hawthorne's allegory distasteful, acknowledged that the abstract moral element gave

¹²"Hawthorne on the Romance: His Prefaces Related and Examined," MP, LIII (August 1955), 20.

¹³"Hawthorne as Poet," SR, LIX (Summer 1951), 457.

universality to Hawthorne's art: "The fact that this abstract element really outvalues the tale and its characters is shown, for example, by the lack of interest one feels in the future of the characters, in what becomes of them at the end of the story; they are lost from the mind, because their function is fulfilled in illustrating an idea; and, that once conveyed, the characters cease to have life,--they disappear, like the man of science or the artist of the beautiful, into the background of the general world; they fade out. It is by this abstract moral element that Hawthorne's art is universalized."¹⁴

In this connection, one can also recognize what Andrew Schiller calls Hawthorne's modernity: "The 'modernity' of Hawthorne resides in the fact that he is so very old-fashioned. The opening out of the moment and the exploration of its meaning as moral adventure (which is the modernity of Henry James and James Joyce), the metaphysical translation of moral dialectic into dramatic activity (which is the modernity of Kafka) are Hawthorne's basic fictional propositions."¹⁵

Perhaps one ought to insert here for the record that Hawthorne in practice certainly as well as in theory emphasized the warmth of the heart and love. These essentials to his belief and art contribute to the relevance of his investigations and analyses of moral ideas. Hawthorne's reality was the reality of the heart, and although he wrote romances

¹⁴Nathaniel Hawthorne (Boston, 1902), p. 156.

¹⁵"The Moment and the Endless Voyage: A Study of Hawthorne's 'Wakefield,'" Diameter, I (March 1951), 7.

his observations and judgments involving either the balance or the imbalance of the heart and mind were thoroughly realistic.

Hawthorne's respect for facts may be thought of primarily as a respect for moral facts. But it must be said that the moral facts in Hawthorne's stories--even though the presence of the supernatural is not uncommon--had a base in the actualities of life. This particular relationship between the moral facts and those of actual circumstance calls to mind that although he wrote romances which were characterized by allegory and the supernatural, he enjoyed novels such as Trollope's. The observation draws attention to the difference between Hawthorne the artist and Hawthorne the man. H. C. MacDowall observes: "Hawthorne had a profound respect for facts; in practice the most inveterate of symbolists, he was a realist at heart."¹⁶

In his notebooks, Hawthorne recorded his impressions of life and the various things that appealed to his imagination. In the English Notebooks, for instance, Hawthorne wrote the following: "Little children are often seen taking care of little children; and it seems to me that they take good and faithful care of them. Today, I heard a dirty mother laughing and priding herself on the pretty ways of her dirty infant--just as a Christian mother might in a nursery or drawing-room. I must study this street-life more, and think of it more deeply."¹⁷ Critics agree that

¹⁶"Nathaniel Hawthorne," p. 236.

¹⁷P. 17.

Hawthorne thought of his notebooks as a depository for facts and recorded glimpses of real life as well as a journal or diary of his personal life. Stewart has demonstrated that by comparing the dates of entry in Hawthorne's journals and the dates of his writings and the recurrence of certain observations one can come to a realization of Hawthorne's use of his notebooks.¹⁸

The relationship between his notebooks and works supports the fact that he did not remain aloof from the problems of actual life. Elaborating on Eliot's point about Hawthorne's work being a true criticism of life, Stewart remarks: Hawthorne was a serious-minded writer whose works, taken together, constitute in the highest sense a criticism of life. (The characters and settings are there as he experienced them through observation; the configurations and tensions came organically from his sympathy and understanding. He probed to the deepest realities of the mind and spirit, and his meanings possess a certain timelessness which carried with it a prophetic sense of the ages to follow."¹⁹

In accord with his theory, Hawthorne's works for the most part structurally developed the meaning. Because of Hawthorne's emphasis on pointing a moral and especially because of his use of symbolism and allegory, one would expect a close relationship between form and content. It would be unrealistic to expect critics to make a uniform

¹⁸ American Notebooks, p. xxxvi.

¹⁹ Biography, p. 242.

judgment on Hawthorne's harmony of form and content, since some like James (who set the fashion for several decades) found allegory distasteful. However, since symbolism and particularly allegory gave final emphasis to meaning over form, one can understand that Hawthorne's form or structure in most instances does carry meaning.

The judgment is based on externals as long as one finds meaning in structure because of the literary techniques employed, such as allegory. Artistic organic unity--internal unity--was an essential part of Hawthorne's theory. Since Hawthorne for the most part probably started with a moral idea and since his primary interest was always in the moral involved, it is natural that his works developed internally, from the "innermost germ." If one does not lightly dismiss the external dramatic development of the theme because of the melodramatic nature of many of Hawthorne's characters and incidents, he will find that there is a surprising unity in Hawthorne's works and also that the structure--except in some of the sketches which are horizontal rather than pyramidal in development--has meaning. Mrs. Leavis is not guilty of hyperbole when she writes that there "are no irrelevancies in Hawthorne's best works and when we seem to find one it should be read with particular care as it will undoubtedly turn out to be structural."²⁰ Waggoner points to "Roger Malvin's Burial" as an example: "And all these meanings are embodied in structure--in situation and character and action, in motive to action

²⁰"Hawthorne as Poet," p. 441.

and result of action. The tale is not as rich in texture as the greatest of Hawthorne's later stories; not so much of the meaning is carried by image and symbol. But it is one of Hawthorne's greatest tales nevertheless, for there is no part of its structure which is not instinct with meaning, and no meaning in the tale which is not embodied in its structure. In it we see exemplified the structure of meaning as Hawthorne created it."²¹

Hawthorne particularly relied upon the past, symbolism, and allegory for the structural development of his moral ideas. His use of history and legend is obvious. Hawthorne was not what one would call a literary historian, nor did he write what one would today call historical novels. He mixed history and legend freely, and he did not hesitate to bring in the fanciful and the supernatural whenever he was so inclined. In regard to the association of the supernatural and the past, Arlin Turner states that Hawthorne found early Puritan times particularly suited to his "fictional use" for the people of that time believed in the literal presence of agents of good and evil who "engaged in a perpetual warfare." Further Turner states that the "characters from those early times could be expected as a matter of course to find in all external manifestations the kind of moral meanings which interested Hawthorne."²²

It is important to remember that Hawthorne did not use the past

²¹ A Critical Study, p. 86.

²² Nathaniel Hawthorne: An Introduction and Interpretation (New York, 1961), p. 28.

"to glorify and idealize it."²³ As mentioned previously, Hawthorne was not an antiquarian. Although he did find the Puritan past quite interesting, especially because of the part that his own ancestors had in it, e. g., the Salem witch trials, Hawthorne employed the past--history and legend--as a means to stimulate his imagination to create. In a letter to Franklin Pierce, he wrote that he did not respond to the actual and the immediate: "The Present, the Immediate, the Actual, has proved too potent for me. It takes away not only my scanty faculty, but even my desire for imaginative composition, and leaves me sadly content to scatter a thousand peaceful fantasies upon the hurricane that is sweeping us all along with it, possibly, into a Limbo where our nation and its polity may be as literally the fragments of a shattered dream as my unwritten Romance."²⁴ Woodberry commented as follows: "History assisted Hawthorne's imagination in its operation by affording that firmness and distinctness of outline which was most needed in his work; it gave body to his creations, but in his most characteristic and original tales this body was not to be one of external fact, but of moral thought. His genius contained a primary element of reflection, of meditation on life, of the abstract; and while his imagination might take its start and find an initial impulse, an occasion, in some concrete object on which it

²³Neal Doubleday, "Hawthorne and Literary Nationalism," AL, XII (January 1941), 451.

²⁴Works, XI, xviii-xix.

fashioned, its course in working itself out was governed by this abstract moral intention."²⁵

Hawthorne did not ignore the present, but in dealing with the realities of life he dealt with the basic actualities of the present. As stated before, the past was one of Hawthorne's means of dealing with the present.

Symbolism and allegory for all practical purposes were one general method for Hawthorne. Momentary reflection suffices to point out that Hawthorne's allegory is different from those of Spenser and Bunyan. No doubt influenced by both men, Hawthorne yet creatively worked with his materials in the best way he could without concern for any conscious imitation or development of a literary form and tradition. Further, as Arvin suggests, Hawthorne was neither a symbolist nor an allegorist in a strict sense of the word, but "a writer sui generis" who occupied a "beautiful terrain of his own between these two artistic modes," much in the matter of an "emblematisit."²⁶ The term "symbolism" in Hawthorne's day was not as distinctively removed in meaning from the term "allegory" as it is today. Judging on the basis of allegory as employed in Everyman and Pilgrim's Progress, one might say that in some respects Hawthorne is more of a symbolist according to the modern concept of the term than an allegorist.

²⁵Nathaniel Hawthorne, p. 137.

²⁶Short Stories, p. xiv.

It is curious that as much as Hawthorne depended upon symbolism and allegory he gave no particular place to allegory in his theory. Various things can be said. First of all, as stated before, Hawthorne never formally developed a theory of art. Second, in creating he responded best to a moral. Third, he dealt with the actualities of the present indirectly by means of treating the higher realities of life. Finally, he may have avoided speaking about allegory because he did not always welcome it, although at the same time he seldom wrote successfully without it.

If Hawthorne personally thought very highly of allegory or the allegorical approach, as Howells did, for instance, of realism, presumably Hawthorne would have commented and written about allegory. As it is, he said extremely little about it. He talked about his "blasted allegories" and yet recognized his "inveterate love of allegory." In his study of the actual and the imaginary in Hawthorne, Robert Kimbrough remarks that the phrase "love of allegory" is a "vague expression which described the manner in which Hawthorne's imagination worked--a manner partly symbolical and partly allegorical."²⁷ He goes on to say that an "estimate" of the nature of Hawthorne's imagination shows "that neither symbolism nor, more particularly, allegory, considered as genres, plays a central part in his conception of art. Because Hawthorne did work with the Imaginary, however, a tendency towards symbolism and allegory seemed

²⁷"The Actual and the Imaginary': Hawthorne's Concept of Art in Theory and Practice," Transactions of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters, I (February 1962), 285.

to enter his writing," but that the remarks in the preface to "Rappaccini's Daughter" "show that Hawthorne was not entirely happy with that tendency."²⁸

Although Hawthorne did not depend upon allegory either as a genre or as a technique, he was inclined to think allegorically. Samuel McChord Crothers correctly observes that Hawthorne's work is definitely something more than allegory, "but his mind worked allegorically. His characters were abstract before they became concrete."²⁹ Fogle says that "allegory is organic to Hawthorne, an innate quality of his vision. It is his disposition to find spiritual meaning in all things natural and human."³⁰ This fact answers the question that Arlin Turner raises: "Since, therefore, Hawthorne was cognizant of the lack of vitality of his characters and of the intangibility of his settings, and since he considered his fondness for symbolism and allegory to be a fault, it may be asked why he did not write differently." As Turner himself states: "The answer lies in the very nature of the man. He could not bring himself to abandon allegory because he thought ultimately in terms of abstractions. His observation took note of only such persons, events, or places as obtruded themselves as manifestations of some general truth. He did not consider a plot, involving a few or many characters, worthwhile unless some element of human

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 287-288.

²⁹ "A Man under Enchantment," Pardoner's Wallet (New York, 1906), p. 264.

³⁰ Hawthorne's Fiction, p. 7.

philosophy could be symbolized."³¹

One might note that in the allegorical details of Hawthorne's work, which Fogle associates with texture in accord with John Crowe Ransom's distinction between structure and texture,³² there is a correspondence to Hawthorne's stated love of realistic detail as found in many of the Dutch and Flemish paintings. Moreover, there is a correspondence between the allegorical and symbolic details and the materiality and substance that he was fearful that his stories lacked, but which Trollope's, for instance, had.

In addition to allegory, another trademark of Hawthorne's style and structure is artistic ambiguity. Although in his statements about art, there is no recognition of artistic ambiguity, he employed the device quite well. Few artists have a greater record of continued successes with this technique. It must be kept in mind, however, that the multiple associations, the alternative meanings, are not the result of mere ambiguousness. Hawthorne's ambiguities are artistically contrived. They are structural in their development, as exemplified by "The Minister's Black Veil," one of the classic examples of artistic ambiguity. Because the development of the ambiguity is implicit in the structure of his stories, one can but assume that Hawthorne was aware of the device.

³¹"Hawthorne as Self-Critic," SAQ, XXXVII (April 1938), 135.

³²Hawthorne's Fiction, p. 68. See John Crowe Ransom, "Criticism as Pure Speculation," The Intent of the Critic, ed. Donald A Stauffer (Princeton, 1941), pp. 91-124.

Otherwise, the results, except by accident, would have been inartistic ambiguities or plain ambiguousness.

The reason given for Hawthorne's use of artistic ambiguity, which includes the concepts of "multiple association" and "alternate meanings," are varied. Ivor Winters, for example writes that Hawthorne was caught in an impasse between the allegorical narrative and the art of the novelist.³³ Matthiessen states that multiple meanings was "a device to heighten our sense of the complexity of the human motives."³⁴ Fogle asserts that Hawthorne used "ambiguity structurally to create suspense and retard conclusions, especially in tales where the primary emphasis would otherwise be too clear," such as in "The Celestial Railroad," and that he also used "tragic ambiguity which threatens the bases of accepted values, as in 'Young Goodman Brown,' where the final interpretation is in genuine doubt."³⁵

These reasons contribute to an understanding of how and why Hawthorne used structural or artistic ambiguity. But another remains to be stated, and that is that Hawthorne did not always think through his themes thoroughly enough to go beyond an ambiguity of thought in his own mind. Now whether by temperament Hawthorne was not inclined intellectually

³³"Maule's Curse, or Hawthorne and the Problem of Allegory," Maule's Curse: Seven Studies in the History of American Obscurantism (Norfolk, Conn., 1938), pp. 17-20.

³⁴American Renaissance, p. 476.

³⁵Hawthorne's Fiction, pp. 12-13.

to be more thorough in his thinking or whether he drew back fearfully from problems that Melville and Hardy desired to investigate and clarify, or both, at least Hawthorne in effect found artistic ambiguity convenient as a formal conclusion to thoughts he either just did not or desired not to pursue further. Although he did not speak of artistic ambiguity in his theory, by frequent use of it, he laid himself open to Fogle's observation that "[a]mbiguity alone, however, is not a satisfactory aesthetic principle,"³⁶ and to the charge that artistic ambiguity consistently employed is not particularly good aesthetics.

In his theory, Hawthorne was not restrictive in matters of the finer points of style. His interest centered primarily on the work's coming to life. When an artist successfully gave expression to the idea or experience, his form and style were justified. Without the inspiration of creativity, stylistic techniques merely demonstrated the superficiality of the work itself.

Regarding Hawthorne's style in his practice, critics generally speak with favor. On the one hand, there is not a great deal to say about the finer points of style since allegory and artistic ambiguity are so pervasive that to a certain extent they dictate style. On the other hand, especially in Hawthorne's more successful work, one finds him deliberate yet reflective and often casual in his handling of sentences, imagery, and diction. A frequent critical observation is his Latin diction. But

³⁶Ibid., p. 22.

his Latin diction does not indicate much other than his somewhat detached relationship to the eighteenth century and the fact that he himself had some training in Latin. It would be difficult to make anything of it. To say that Hawthorne's diction is Latinate is a half truth which leaves one almost where he started.

In Hawthorne, The Artist, Leland Schubert sums up much of his analysis of Hawthorne's style by saying: "He employs mass, line, movement, contrast, and variety for the creation of artistic effects. He is rhythmical. He produces stimuli which evoke vivid images in color, in light-and-shade, and in sound. He uses selection with fine discrimination."³⁷ Without attempting to detract from Schubert's detailed and accurate observations, one notes that his comments about Hawthorne's style are not distinctively different from those about the finer stylistic points of most writers.

One does find that more distinctive to Hawthorne's style is his bold and consistent use of contrast between light and dark. In The Scarlet Letter, for example, other than the rose bush beside the prison, one does not especially remember any particular color imagery in the novel, even though there are, e. g., the red flare of the meteor, the rich embroidery of Hester's work, the rose in the Governor's garden. One has the vivid awareness of light and shadow, of light and dark, throughout as if all the colors blended and faded either into the brilliance of love and warmth and the glare of the sun or into the somber

³⁷Hawthorne, the Artist: Fine-Art Devices in Fiction (Chapel Hill, 1944), pp. 176-177.

lack of joy and the shadowy edge of revenge and the dark forest.

Contrast, a very ordinary device in itself, gives a focus to some of the characteristics of Hawthorne's style, such as his distinctive use of light and dark. One also finds the contrast between the simplicity of his works and at the same time their complexity. Although his plot outlines and characters are simply drawn, there is a moral depth to his stories that one does not always find unless he permits himself to settle down into the work itself. Hawthorne's allegory and symbolism as they affect structure and also texture of his works contribute quite directly to this underlying complexity of his stories. Artistic ambiguity points up the complexity that Hawthorne himself realized concerning the moral issues involved. About the simplicity and at the same time the complexity in Hawthorne's stories, Fogle writes: "Hawthorne's writing is misleading in its simplicity, which is genuine enough but tempts us to overlook what lies beneath. In the end, simplicity is one of his genuine charms combined with something else. The essence of Hawthorne is, in fact, distilled from the opposing elements of simplicity and complexity."³⁸

In order that simplicity and complexity supplement each other, clarity of design is essential. In his stories, Hawthorne's interest in the moral usually provided the animating principle and gave impetus to the internal unity. As his structure developed, often by means of allegory, it was directed and nourished by the moral itself. Such a process

³⁸Hawthorne's Fiction, pp. 3-4.

contributed to the clarity of design and made possible the harmonious interrelationship between simplicity and complexity in both form and content.

Commenting on Hawthorne's style, Rose Weiffenbach remarks: "Insofar as Hawthorne, the writer, is concerned we find an orderly mind bent on making and succeeding in making a single effect; we discover regulation beneath a careful casualness; we discover reflexion, not spontaneity."³⁹ The statement applies to Hawthorne's imagery as well as to the over-all simplicity and clarity of his works. One of the more recurring images is that of the heart. The frequency of the heart image is natural because Hawthorne found the heart to be basic in his study of motivations and because of his assertions that a warm heart, love, and a balance of the head and heart were the means to stem the tide of evil and to live a full life on earth. In general, his imagery either became enveloped in or contributed directly to the structure as a whole. In regard to color, for instance, Walter Blair remarks that in both tales and his great romances, Hawthorne "employs hues and chiaroscuro" for three purposes: "to characterize, to mark important changes in the narrative, and to stand for moral meaning."⁴⁰ Again, Schubert notes that color in Hawthorne's

³⁹"A Technical Analysis of Hawthorne's Style," p. 43.

⁴⁰"Color, Light and Shadow in Hawthorne's Fiction," NEQ, XV (March 1942), 77.

works is "an emotional element rather than merely a descriptive one."⁴¹

For his imagery Hawthorne drew upon the mysterious, the fanciful, the supernatural, and also upon the commonplace. In his imagery, one sees again both simplicity and complexity. Yet because of the simplicity and the ordinary character of much of his imagery, one could unwittingly minimize the amount of imagery in Hawthorne. Its presence, however, is pervasive and in itself an integral part of the structure and meaning of the tales. About the frequently commonplace use of imagery in Hawthorne and its simplicity, it is well to observe, as Turner notes, that Hawthorne's images were a part of contemporary common knowledge: "Hawthorne's figures of speech and symbols are never private or remote or esoteric; in fact they derive mainly from commonplace sources and belong to common knowledge. Those deriving from the lore of witchcraft and alchemy were no exceptions, for they rarely employ materials less familiar than Satan's black book or the laboratory furnace. Frequently the figures and symbols are both clear and self-concealing, so that the meaning thus conveyed comes across with a naturalness that suggests inevitability."⁴²

Reflection, casualness, and a naturalness that quite often suggests inevitability describe Hawthorne's style and art of story-telling in general. He was reflective, not spontaneous; he liked shadow, yet in actuality there is more light and sunshine in his stories than what one

⁴¹Hawthorne, the Artist, p. 97.

⁴²Introduction and Interpretation, p. 133.

may at first notice. His stories are frequently complex in theme and structural details, yet one remembers his simplicity. In this respect Hawthorne's stylistic practice is not far removed from his theory, for he expressed a fond appreciation for the minute and realistic detail of the Flemish and Dutch masters combined with the majesty and grandeur of Raphael.

Hawthorne was a conscious artist with an innate sense of craftsmanship. He did not contrive a set of rules to guide him in his literary career. His artistic principles concerning form were common to different literary periods. His concept of art did not change throughout the course of his life time. Yet Hawthorne developed gradually; his extended seclusion and his having burned manuscripts without later regret testify to that. He extended himself artistically, and after much experimentation he began to find himself in his tales and sketches culminating in the publication of Mosses from an Old Manse. Woodberry remarks that "Hawthorne reached artistic consciousness, and a mastery of aim and method, slowly and along no one line of development; rather his genius seemingly put forth many tendrils, seeking direction and support and growth, and gradually in these hundred tales he found himself and his art."⁴³

Still, Hawthorne never did become certain of his art with finality. In his half apologetic prefaces he seemed to exaggerate what he assumed

⁴³ Nathaniel Hawthorne, p. 137.

the public thought of as weaknesses. He gave the impression of being more aware of his weakness than of his strength,⁴⁴ and of being cautious in the enjoyment of his own works. Even as late as 1860, in a letter to Fields, he professed not to have a taste for his kind of writing.⁴⁵

His consciousness of his limitations and his stated dislike for his own writings probably reflect Hawthorne's attempt to establish intercourse with the world. Also, this awareness reflects the fact that he had no particular theory of art which he had consciously, let alone systematically, crystallized for himself. It is not difficult to conclude that Hawthorne did not know himself as an artist as much as he might have, and one becomes inclined to accept Julian's conviction of the dichotomy between the man and the artist, in that the artist was just one phase or projection of Hawthorne the man.

Comments that Hawthorne made concerning the externals of art were not many. In a letter to Longfellow, he expressed the opinion that the autumn of life "may be the golden age both of the intellect and the imagination," and he hoped that he like Longfellow would improve with years.⁴⁶ He thought that he could write better during the autumn and winter months, for they were his "hour of inspiration."⁴⁷ To Fields he wrote (Sept. 3, 1858) that the Italian atmosphere was "not favorable

⁴⁴A Critical Study, p. 27.

⁴⁵Quoted partly in Turner, Introduction and Interpretation, p. 68.

⁴⁶Life of Longfellow, II, 258-259.

⁴⁷Works, II, 149.

to the close toil of composition," and that to be in working trim he needed to breathe the fogs of old England or the east-winds of Massachusetts."⁴⁸ Also he protested in The Blithedale Romance that "Intellectual activity was incompatible with any large amount of bodily exercise,"⁴⁹ and in "The Custom House" he stated that the business environment of the custom house dulled his imagination.⁵⁰

Hawthorne's practice and Hawthorne the artist were both troubling problems to Hawthorne the man. Ordinarily one would assume that an artist would go beyond expressing his distaste for his works in favor of more realistic things and make a determined effort to reconcile theory and practice. Yet aside from those problems, his accomplishment is significant, and made him one of the key figures in the development of native American literature, particularly as viewed through the symbolist movement of the present time.

⁴⁸Yesterday with Authors, p. 83.

⁴⁹Works, VIII, 91.

⁵⁰Ibid., VI, 48-49.

CHAPTER VIII

RECONCILIATION OF THEORY AND PRACTICE: HAWTHORNE THE MAN

The differences between Hawthorne's theory and practice to a great extent can be accounted for by his artistic temperament and by his disinclination to be intellectually more thorough. He did not strike out from what Ishmael called his insular Tahiti.

To Hawthorne, the warmth of the heart and its security were basic. Life and its affections were more important to him than anything else, even his art. He did particularly enjoy his politically appointed ^{not?} positions in England and America. Having decided early in life to be a writer, he wrote with determination at various periods throughout his lifetime. Good writing, however, became an increasing drudgery for him, and in his later years he was not successfully productive. He seemed to have had difficulty in gaining the proper command of his faculties in order to write. In a letter to Ticknor (March 4, 1859)-- after expressing his trepidation about appearing before the public "with all the uncertainties of a new author," since he had not published for some time--Hawthorne wrote that if he were rich enough he did not believe he would ever publish another book although he would continue

to write for his own occupation and amusement.¹ Hawthorne's letter may have been written when he was not in the gayest of moods, but it suggests that he was not naturally inclined to exert all of himself for his art. Stewart states that just as Hawthorne said that Kenyon was not a consummate artist because he loved Hilda more than sculpture, Hawthorne himself could not be considered a consummate artist either, because there were things dearer to him than his art: "If he felt an incompatibility between the affections and the austere devotion to his craft, he was able to put aside the craft long enough to warm his heart at the domestic fire-side."²

Perhaps this distinction in Hawthorne's life between his family and his art contributed along with other things to the fact that he never really formulated a theory of art. To Hawthorne, his life was more important than his art. It is ironic that later in Hawthorne's life, as the artist in him and his art failed him, he as a man sensed failure and accomplished little. Whether Hawthorne realized it or not, art was his means of looking at life (i. e., formulating a point of view) and of making adjustments. In this connection, Hawthorne did not see, as Matthiessen suggests, that art was more fundamental than nature.³ It

¹Letters of Nathaniel Hawthorne to William D. Ticknor (Newark, 1910), II, 76.

²Biography, p. 252.

³American Renaissance, p. 274.

was Hawthorne's mistake not to see that he could have served his heart more definitely for the long term if he had not made the distinction or permitted the distinction to have been made between the man and the artist, but have let the artist in him help shape the man and arrive at an aesthetic that could well have also permitted a more thorough philosophical commitment.

To speak more particularly about Hawthorne's temperament in order to understand him better as an artist, one has to admit that in certain respects the evidence is limited. Yet on the basis of what is known, one can say that Hawthorne wrote as he could⁴ and that he never formed a theory that took into account his practice equally with what he said he liked in literature and in the other fine arts. Edwin Whipple states that Hawthorne did not use his genius, but that his genius used him. Whipple maintains that this observation "is so true" that Hawthorne succeeded better in what called forth his personal antipathies than in what called forth his personal sympathies.⁵ In regard to Hawthorne, but about authors in general, Austin Warren makes the following remark: "Critics have sometimes talked as though a man could choose whether or not he will write with the grandeur of generality, whether he will choose native themes or cosmopolitan, whether he will write about himself for himself or of our common humanity and for all sorts and conditions of

⁴Arvin, Hawthorne, p. 207.

⁵"Hawthorne," Character and Characteristic Men (Boston, 1866), p. 234.

men. The question is academic, for no writer of rank can make such a choice. His vocation requires an eye single for the reception of what he sees. He cannot, 'by doctrinal resolves at the moment of composition, add a cubit to his stature. No author can make himself the complete man save by looking widely at the world of his own experience and deeply into himself and his intimates."⁶

Unquestionably Hawthorne wrote in accord with his artistic and moral temperament. That is to say that a moral was fundamental to his art and that he wrote as he could. How passive Hawthorne was in following his natural inclinations, however, is debatable, but perhaps not as passive as Bertha Faust permits one to infer from the following statement:

One may ask finally: how did the criticisms of his contemporaries affect Hawthorne as a writer? The answer is, probably, that they did not affect him at all. Hawthorne was invincibly modest; he often professed gratitude for favorable comments and sometimes declared that he hoped to profit by censures. He was always promising (to himself or to his friends) that he would attempt to meet the current demand and write something more "general." In his later years he elected Whipple as his literary mentor, and appealed to him upon various problems with touching eagerness, quite as if he were not one of the most eminent authors of the day and presumably in a position to give, rather than to ask, advice. But his talent, had, from its beginning, taken an unmistakable bent; and it pursued its own path with very little exterior influence and even with very little coercion from its possessor. Hawthorne apparently resigned himself to his fate. If he sometimes wished that he could write otherwise than he did he was quite convinced that it was impossible. Undoubtedly he owed something to the response of his public as well as to the kindness of his friends. If he had had no readers he would very possibly have written less. If Fields had not encouraged him he might not have attempted to write a

⁶"Nathaniel Hawthorne," Rage for Order (Chicago, 1948), p. 84.

novel. But the character of his work and its subject matter seems to have been equally unaffected by praise or blame.⁷

Another matter in connection with Hawthorne's temperament is that he was not inclined to metaphysical speculation, although he could not help being interested in ideas if only on the level of meditation and practical moral speculation.⁸ Possibly Hawthorne saw the horrors of launching out into the infinite and the unknown and withdrew from the landlessness, in which Ishmael says resides the highest truth, to the boundary of moral implications. In this connection, commenting about "Roger Malvin's Burial," Waggoner says that the "experience it affords is highly intellectual, but it is experience conceived and structured in aesthetic, not in philosophic terms."⁹ An artist is not required to be philosophical. However, as long as he persists in raising questions of a philosophical (metaphysical) nature, one can expect him to follow through. This expectation remains despite the fact that an artist may have the urge to feel his way through problems rather than to think them through. Darrel Abel writes that

⁷Hawthorne's Contemporaneous Reputation: A Study of Literary Opinion in America and England, 1828-1864 (Philadelphia, 1939), pp. 144-145.

⁸Matthiessen, American Renaissance, p. 243.

⁹A Critical Study, p. 88.

Hawthorne had no urge to philosophize--that is, to abstract, define, and systematize the diverse phenomena of experience into some sort of rational order which the mind might rest upon as having a faithful correspondence to reality. But he had one trait of the philosopher, which might be called an expanding consciousness; he never touched the limits of his reality, and although he had no urge to think his way through infinity, he had an urge to feel his way through it. His temperament was that of the artist, seeking to represent life in striking similitudes addressed more to men's pulses than to their intellects. His literary techniques admirably served his constant literary purpose--vivid exhibition of the moral struggles of mankind.¹⁰

As a mark of his temperament as well as a shield from some of the inscrutable mysteries of the more profound realities of life, e. g., why evil exists, Hawthorne artistically rather than intellectually probed moral truths and their implications for the life of man. Ironically in view of the frequent charges prior to the criticism of the last ten to fifteen years that Hawthorne was unsociable and was not concerned about the sociological crises of his time, Hawthorne is far more intellectually thorough on a sociological level than he is on the philosophical level. He faithfully drummed brotherly love and a sensible balance of the head and the heart, and his comments in the aggregate about the actual life of man in relation to his fellowman are quite complete. Although he did not always talk about society as such, he saw more deeply than some of his contemporary "sociologists" did. At the same time, it is unfair to minimize Hawthorne's use of the intellect and to discredit his art. In order not to detract from the validity of Hawthorne's

¹⁰"A Masque of Love and Death," UTQ, XXIII (October 1953), pp. 22-23.

artistic conclusions, one might keep in mind Waggoner's observation that Hawthorne was a far more valid thinker in his stories than in his note books.¹¹

About Hawthorne's procedure, however, the following remarks of an anonymous writer are interesting. He sees in Hawthorne's method something in the fashion of "an application to Ethics of the Baconian experimental method of inquiry":

He does not reason out his questions: he verifies them; and the experimental survey must be thorough and exhaustive to secure the inclusion of all possible contingencies. Moral and psychological problems which by the abstract thinker would be analysed and acutely discussed are by him--we shall not say solved, for positive solution is what he rarely ventures to commit himself to--but, in anatomical phrase, demonstrated, by exhibiting the bearings, the workings, and consequences of the data, in concrete and living forms in many and various aspects. Given combinations of moral and spiritual forces are not judged of speculatively. He reduces them to experiment and illustration. He embodies them in the creatures of his imagination, in their character and circumstances, and with the unerring sympathy and instinct of genius he inspires them with life and evolves the results, leaving these to speak for themselves.

That in the prosecution of such experimental Ethics through the instrumentality of the imagination, he evinces somewhat the spirit and tendency of a casuist, must perhaps be granted, in the sense that he generally selects cases which are out of the ordinary run of daily life, which are delicate, fine, and intricate in the complexity and often in the contradictoriness of their elements, and which cannot be decided--which he at least is too judicial, too conscientious to decide--in the rough and ready style, and by the sound, but not always nicely discriminating rules that prevail with salutary results in a practical and busy life.¹²

¹¹A Critical Study, p. 62.

¹²"Nathaniel Hawthorne," North British Review, American edition, XLIX (September 1868), p. 95.

Unless Hawthorne's failure or hesitancy to be intellectually thorough can be accounted for on the basis of his temperament alone, one may ask what else may have kept him from being more thorough. He certainly had a sense of the realities of life. In his characters, he did not flinch from developing their intellects at the sacrifice of their hearts, e. g., Ethan Brand, Aylmer, Rappaccini. He investigated freely the hypocrisy of New England Puritans. But he never characterized himself as a man who personally went beyond the moral implications to consider the outcome of his speculations. Matthew Browne raises the question about the nature of Hawthorne's speculations and concludes that Hawthorne himself was unable to answer the questions he raised: "Had Hawthorne that certain degree of speculative force? We think not. His imagination, along with much speculative apprehensiveness, is always bringing up questions which he never seizes by the throat. In his pages you are for ever meeting some ghost of this kind; your magician has called him up, but does not lay him for you. It is fair to assume that he could not lay him for himself."¹³ Marcus Cunliffe echoes the same thought when he says that "Hawthorne asks questions but rarely answers them: he gropes with no confidence in the outcome."¹⁴ Olsen sums up what becomes almost an unavoidable conclusion about Hawthorne: "Man cannot really know, Hawthorne says in effect, and,

¹³"Nathaniel Hawthorne," Eclectic, LXXVII (August 1871), p. 177.

¹⁴The Literature of the United States (Bungay, England, [1954] 1955), p. 97.

therefore, he must develop human sympathy as his moral standard. His absolute equivocation is his manner of moral search as well as his literary technique."¹⁵

In regard to the possibility of Hawthorne's concern about the dangers of going too far in his speculations, there is further evidence in his works. In The Blithedale Romance, on the occasion of an evening storm, Coverdale remarked that the storm "seemed to have arisen for our especial behoof,--a symbol of the cold, desolate, distrustful phantoms that invariably haunt the mind, on the eve of adventurous enterprises, to warn us back within the ordinary boundaries of ordinary life."¹⁶ In The Scarlet Letter, Dimmesdale initially enjoyed conversing with Chillingworth: "It was as if a window were thrown open, admitting a freer atmosphere into the close and stifled study, where his life was wasting itself away, amid lamplight or obstructed day-beams, and the musty fragrance, be it sensual or moral, that exhales from books. But the air was too fresh and chill to be long breathed with comfort."¹⁷ Dimmesdale was ready to acknowledge another view of life, but guardedly. A realistic observation about the moral dangers in life that might come from pressing too strenuously for answers is implied in Kenyon's thought: "No life now wanders like an unfettered stream; there is a millwheel for

¹⁵"Hawthorne's Integration of Methods and Materials," p. 234.

¹⁶Works, VIII, 21-22.

¹⁷Ibid., VI, 175.

the tiniest rivulet to turn. We go all wrong, by too strenuous a resolution to go all right."¹⁸

Another possible reason for Hawthorne's not being more intellectually thorough is that he may have reached somewhat of an impasse in that his taste was for realistic details whereas his own creative faculty led him to the shadows and mysteries of his particular kind of romance. Other than recognizing this distinction, he neither attempted to reconcile the two nor in his statements about art suggested a theory that would take into close account his own writings.

In defending Hawthorne against the charge of pessimism, James has the following to say about Hawthorne's pervasive quality of mind and his inclination to be content with moral adjustments:

Pessimism consists in having morbid and bitter views and theories about human nature; not in indulging in shadowy fancies and conceits. There is nothing whatever to show that Hawthorne had any such doctrines or convictions; certainly the note of depression, of despair, of the disposition to undervalue the human race, is never sounded in his Diaries. These volumes contain the record of very few convictions or theories of any kind; they move with curious evenness, with a charming, graceful flow, on a level which lies above that of a man's philosophy. They adhere with such persistence to this upper level that they prompt the reader to believe that Hawthorne had no appreciable philosophy at all--no general views that were in the least uncomfortable. They are the exhibition of an unperplexed intellect. I said just now that the development of Hawthorne's mind was not toward sadness; and I should be inclined to go still further, and say that his mind proper--his mind in so far as it was a repository of opinions and articles of faith--had no development that it is of especial importance to

¹⁸ Ibid., x, 38.

look into. What had a development was his imagination--that delicate and penetrating imagination which was always at play, always entertaining itself, always engaged in a game of hide-and-seek in the region in which it seemed to him that the game would best be played--among the shadows and substructions, the dark-based pillars and supports of our moral nature. Beneath this movement and ripple of his imagination--as free and spontaneous as that of the sea-surface--lay directly his personal affections. These were solid and strong, but, according to my impression, they had the place very much to themselves.¹⁹

Applying one of Matthew Arnold's critical principles, William T. Scott said that "[o]ne of the necessary things which was lacking in Hawthorne was the sense of absolute conviction. He knew when he was dealing with his characters that he was dealing with the paint and paste-board of his imagination. . . . Hawthorne wavered too much. He lacked the high element of seriousness."²⁰

A far more serious charge is that of indolence. T. S. Eliot says that James' observation of "'a strain of generous indolence in his (Hawthorne's) composition'" is "understating the fault of laziness for which Hawthorne can chiefly be blamed." Eliot goes on to say, however, that "gentleness is needed in criticizing Hawthorne" for the "soil which produced him with his essential flavor is the soil which produced, just as inevitably, the environment which stunted him."²¹ It must be remembered that James, Woodberry, Eliot, not to mention more recent critics, dislike allegory and think that it is an extreme of the fanciful.

¹⁹Hawthorne, pp. 22-23.

²⁰"Hawthorne," Chesterton and Other Essays (New York, 1912), p. 237.

²¹"The Hawthorne Aspect," p. 861.

Eliot even states that allegory "is a lazy substitute for profundity."²² On the one hand, allegory in itself does not necessarily deter one from intellectual thoroughness and depth, although it may take the edge off originality. On the other hand, aside from Hawthorne's temperament and the working of his mind, allegory as it worked out could have been a substitute for his thinking. It is true that allegory along with artistic ambiguity made it possible for Hawthorne in effect to avoid a more thorough intellectual speculation.

In the article "Hawthorne's Fiction," Leon Howard maintains that ambiguity in Hawthorne resulted from his increasing awareness of the complexities of life: "It is an intellectual ambiguity--quite different from a disguised or deliberately undetermined meaning--which comes from Hawthorne's habit of posing questions before he can supply the answers; and it is not the ambiguity of the settled craftsman but of the developing man who is growing in knowledge, in his awareness of the complexities of life, and in his interest in problems which are beyond the powers of empirical understanding."²³ The statement unfortunately is misleading, for after Hawthorne once found himself his manner and methods show no essential change during the remainder of his literary career. Also, he continued to raise the same questions in much the same way and with much the same kind of answers. Henry Seidel Canby underestimates Hawthorne's

²²Ibid., p. 862.

²³P. 240.

seriousness as an artist when he says that "the veil of unreality, the reticence of the indirect, the indefiniteness of fancy, which hold the interest yet never commit the writer to a final solution--these were tricks of the romanticist's trade ready at hand."²⁴ In the following entry in his notebooks, even though he immediately afterwards wrote: "What a misty disquisition I have scribbled! I would not read it over for sixpence," Hawthorne himself gave reason for one to question critically his hesitancy to probe more deeply:

Lights and shadows are continually flitting across my inward sky, and I know neither whence they come nor whither they go; nor do I inquire too closely into them. It is dangerous to look too minutely into such phenomena. It is apt to create a substance where at first there was a mere shadow. . . . If at any time there should seem to be an expression unintelligible from one soul to another, it is best not to strive to interpret it in earthly language, but wait for the soul to make itself understood; and, were we to wait a thousand years, we need deem it no more time than we can spare. . . . It is not that I have any love of mystery, but because I abhor it, and because I have often felt that words may be a thick and darksome veil of mystery between the soul and the truth which it seeks. Wretched were we, indeed, if we had no better means of communicating ourselves, no fairer garb in which to array our essential being, than these poor rags and tatters of Babel. Yet words are not without their use even for purposes of explanation, but merely for explaining outward acts and all sorts of external things, leaving the soul's life and action to explain itself in its own way.²⁵

Uncertainty of belief contributed to the artistic uncertainty, which became quite evident in Hawthorne's later years. This relationship explains why artistic ambiguity was natural to him, and it also explains

²⁴"Hawthorne and Melville," Classic Americans (New York, 1959), p. 240.

²⁵American Notebooks, Works, XVIII, 276-277.

in part why there is a divergence between his theory and practice. The Marble Faun is an example of poor art resulting from intellectual uncertainty and a lack of thoroughness. Hyatt Waggoner writes: "In plot too, as well as characters and explicit symbolism, Hawthorne faltered. And he faltered at precisely that point where, if we remember 'Alice Doane's Appeal,' we should expect him to falter, in dealing with the question of the responsibility for the sin that precipitates Donatello's fall."²⁶ Howard says that the crucial problem of The Marble Faun is "intellectual flabbiness," and that the flaws "seem to be the result of a basic lack of intellectual self-assurance."²⁷ One can keep in mind that The Scarlet Letter is not without intellectually unresolved questions, e. g., the contradictory statements in regard to predestination and those intended to provide a base for Hester and Dimmesdale's hope of forgiveness. In this later novel, however, the artistic achievement is sufficiently successful to overshadow such problems. In it Hawthorne's art disciplined his thought to the point that in spite of certain unresolved questions it is not flabby.

Further, although artistic ambiguity in itself is not a poor artistic device, continued use of it leads to poor aesthetics. If the same questions are consistently raised, artistic ambiguity becomes a kind of tease. One eventually begins to sense the lack of a catharsis whereas previously he had no particular awareness of needing one. The

²⁶ A Critical Study, p. 213.

²⁷ "Hawthorne's Fiction," p. 247.

author, in such circumstances, builds up a false desire for a catharsis, in that he has not proceeded to develop this desire in an artistically logical way.

Finally to understand Hawthorne the artist, one has to take into consideration Hawthorne the man. The literary value of Hawthorne's work remains untouched in the process. But in this way one can come to an understanding of Hawthorne the artist and of the peculiar nature of the divergence between his theory and practice. If Julian's statement is true that Hawthorne the man was separate from Hawthorne the artist--as other evidence suggests--then one can understand with more certainty why Hawthorne the artist was hindered if not partly sacrificed by Hawthorne the man:

Few men, who have made literature the business of their lives, have been less dependent than Hawthorne upon literature for a character. If he had never written a line, he would still have possessed, as a human being, scarcely less interest and importance than he does now. Those who were most intimate with him not only found in him all the promise of his works, but they found enough more to put the works quite in the background. His literary phase seemed a phase only, and not the largest or most characteristicSome men are swallowed up by their profession, so that nothing is left of them but the profession in human form. But for men like Hawthorne, the profession is but a means of activity; they use it, are not used by it.²⁸

The question of Hawthorne's loss of artistic powers in his last years is an incidental concern in this study, but an interesting one. One ought not underestimate the economic motive. Waggoner, for instance,

²⁸Hawthorne and Wife, I, 244.

states that "Hawthorne worked hard at becoming a man of letters until he was recognized as being one. After that, he worked at it only when forced to by need for money or the demands of conscience."²⁹ But beyond that, and more important, Waggoner also states that Hawthorne evidently experienced a loss of belief, of meaning.³⁰ And Edward Davidson points out that in Grimshawe Hawthorne had no moral point of view or design.³¹

This latter fact emphasizes that, in addition to the innate characteristics and qualities of his temperament and over and above the distinction between the man and the artist, Hawthorne's lack of intellectual thoroughness and his intellectual uncertainty were influential on his art.

²⁹A Critical Study, p. 7.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 234-237.

³¹Davidson, ed., Doctor Grimshawe's Secret (Cambridge, Mass., 1954), pp. 13-14.

CHAPTER IX

HAWTHORNE THE ARTIST

An artist is not obligated to be philosophical. Nor is he held responsible for publicizing his philosophy of life. Implicit in his works and oral statements, however, is his attitude toward life, his philosophy. If he has no particular philosophy of life, if he has not thought or felt thoroughly and deeply in order to give himself a base and a sense of values that will give principle and character to his work--for the time being if not in a more permanent sense--his art eventually will reveal a certain degree either of intellectual insufficiency or of intellectual irresponsibility. His writings may face the judgment of being either shallow or confused, since almost unavoidably there is a relationship between intellectual and artistic discipline.

An exception is the one whose art specifically is his means of putting order into his life, his means of formulating his point of view (in contrast, e. g., to one who merely voices his point of view). With such a procedure--and this can be expected of an artist,--artistically he will reach conclusions of a philosophic validity even though he

he is not especially interested in being philosophic. But if he does not go all the way in that his art and his intellect do not reciprocally discipline and propel each other forward to individual thoroughness, he with his art as well as with his thought will stop short of final crystallization and distinction, indeed, of clarity and simplicity.

To emphasize the intellect as an essential discipline of art is not to omit the value of the emotions. The emotions serve as the common denominator and the final test of the relevancy of the idea (the artistic experience) and of the work of art itself. But an enduring aesthetic principle cannot be established on the basis of the emotions alone, for they tend to turn in upon themselves and become too personal. The emotions need the discipline of the intellect and of form, artistic form, in order to possess genuine universality and originality.

The modern artist in this day of demythologizing and searching for new myths needs to be especially alert to thoroughness in order that his work be permanently relevant. A writer who thinks, feels, and works within a system of thought--e. g., Greek and Roman mythology, Aristotelianism, Platonism, traditional Biblical Christianity--in some instances, in the past particularly, may receive credit for a thoroughness that

basically the system rather than he developed. Any lack of originality and personal intellectual and emotional activity is bound to be shown up, however. But the modern writer who develops his own myths, as did Joyce and Faulkner, for example, must be quite certain of his intellectual and artistic relevance, for he and his art are more exposed. In

this, on the other hand, may lie his distinctive challenge. Finally, whether the artist works within an established system of thought and feeling or not, with his intellectual and creative powers and activity he is responsible for the concept and the production of the work that, receiving life from him, takes on its own entity and stands alone.

When an artist thinks, feels, and works thoroughly, he achieves simplicity, perfection of form, and validity of expression. This places a premium on the artist's use of his own powers, on his personal integrity, and also on his willingness to work. Although Hawthorne did not always think thoroughly, in most instances he felt thoroughly, and his artistic conclusions were usually valid, i. e., if not too ambiguous. In spite of his tendency to hold off from thorough intellectual activity, no aspersions can be cast about the genuineness of Hawthorne's imaginative sympathy for humanity and his concern for moral truth.

In his theory of art, his emphasis on the integrity of the artist was often revealed by his insistence on the artist's depth and unity of feeling. Hawthorne stressed feeling over the intellect, and the validity of the feeling depended upon the artist's feeling deeply (cf. Hawthorne's emphasis on brooding thought), upon personal honesty, and upon imaginative sympathy.

These qualities in turn helped to give rise to inspiration, to genius, which gave the final distinction and touch to the artist's imaginative experience, and also perfected his craftsmanship in that the form took on a life of its own. Life was given to the work by the artist

who, being stimulated, came to life in the process of creating. The artist, then, finished creation.

Basically, according to Hawthorne, art took its principles and forms from nature. Art followed nature, worked with it, and perfected it in that art gave external order to nature. At the same time, art had to recognize the superiority of nature. In this respect also, art looked for beauty and presented beauty. But beauty was not just an aesthetic concept. For Hawthorne, the concept of beauty was moral as well as aesthetic. Truth and beauty were the goals of good art, and together they glorified nature and God and contributed to the development of the life of man.

Emphasizing truth and beauty as the province and the goal of art, Hawthorne was concerned with the idea of nature and life--primarily a moral concept--but at the same time he did not lose sight of the actual. Hawthorne's stories included the vague and mysterious, the past and the supernatural, but they also dealt very much with the actual life of man: his hopes and disappointments, love and hate, frustrations and joy, hypocrisy and struggle for integrity, intellectual pride and moral honesty, cowardly fear and heartwarming courage.

He approached this material of life indirectly by use of the imagination, which permitted him to justify his romances over the novel, but he dealt directly with the mind and the heart of man. He did not concern himself directly with society, although he did now and then as in The Blithedale Romance. However, his stories and comments about life and

morality are directly relevant in terms of society, and this was in accord with his theory in that he believed that love and imaginative sympathy for humanity were essential for an artist.

Although there has never been any serious question about the universality of Hawthorne's art, his theory of art reveals more scope than what one might initially suppose. For Hawthorne was not a romantic escapist into the past nor one who ignored the social problems of his time. He was a moral realist, and on a social-psychological level as well as on a moral-philosophical level. In that respect his use of symbols crystallized his own artistic investigations and conclusions, and in turn emphasizes for us his relevance in regard to the social and moral problems of man.

Hawthorne ardently believed in the moral value of art. At the same time, he believed in the enjoyment of the creative process itself and of good craftsmanship. In this connection also, he held the artist responsible; for integrity of feeling and integrity of craftsmanship give rise to the inspiration of creativity per se.

Hawthorne, then, was an artist who basically achieved his greatest accomplishments--along with several literary techniques that he did not account for in his theory--as he worked in accord with his chief principles: to feel, to exercise imaginative sympathy, to present moral truth and beauty, and to find satisfaction in work well done.

These principles, and Hawthorne's carrying them through, clarify the hard core of his artistic accomplishment, and even aside from his

literary relationship to the symbolism movement of the present, reassert in our own day his significant place in American literature.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this dissertation has been to determine Hawthorne's literary theory on the basis, primarily, of his own statements. This study defines Hawthorne's literary theory separately from his practice. It points out that the discrepancies between his theory and practice result mainly from a difference in techniques rather than from a difference in principles. For Hawthorne's success stems basically from his carrying out his principles of art, e. g., sympathetic imagination of the artist and good craftsmanship.

This study should aid modern scholarship by making clear that distinction, and also by drawing attention to the artistic temperament of Hawthorne the man. A further aid to the contemporary study of Hawthorne is the emphasis on the artist's own critical principles (frequently implied rather than stated) and on the relationship of his personal philosophy to his aesthetic theory. Finally, this study should reassert the basic approach to an author in that the author's own statements and works should be allowed to interpret themselves rather than be interpreted according to critical principles of a literary period or according to the critic's own principles. The principles of a period and of the critic should not form categorical lines along which an author is

then studied. For should they be imposed on the author. Instead, they should serve in order to guide, to discipline, and to supplement. The artist has the right, first of all, to interpret himself. External theories are valid as they help to define and to evaluate the artist's interpretation of himself and then as they enable one to view the reciprocal relationship of the artist to his time.

In that this dissertation is based on Hawthorne's own statements as supplemented by his works, it is an attempt to achieve objectivity in literary criticism. In following the previously outlined procedure, this study has not sacrificed the body of Hawthorne criticism, but has depended upon critical writings to discipline and to supplement the investigation of the primary sources. It is hoped that the emphasis on this age-old approach--which some critics occasionally give the impression of having overlooked--and also that the conclusion of the dissertation itself will contribute to a further understanding of Hawthorne the man and the artist.

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APPROVAL SHEET

The dissertation submitted by Kenneth Heinitz has been read and approved by five members of the Department of English.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the dissertation is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

June 10, 1963
Date

Martin J. Sraglie
Signature of Adviser